Alf Hiltebeitel

Dharma

Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative

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ALF HILTEBEITEL

To Elena Garcés Echavarria

Contents

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Abbreviations

Of Indic Texts and Inscriptions

Ā, ĀpDhS	Āpastamba Dharmasūtra
AB	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
AmbS	Ambaṭṭha Sutta
AN	Aṅguttara Nikaya
AV	Atharva Veda
AS	Aggañña Sutta
B, BDhS	Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra
BĀU	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
BC	Buddhacarita
BhavP	Bhaviṣya(t) Purāṇa
ChU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
Chinese CS	Candragarbha Sūtra
DN	Dīgha Nikāya
BhG, Gītā	Bhagavad Gītā
G, GDhS	Gautama Dharmasūtra
HV	Harivaṃśa
KA	Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra
KS	Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā
KU	Kaṭha Upaniṣad
M, Manu	Mānava Dharmaśāstra
Mbh, MBh	Mahābhārata
MN	Majjhima Nikāya

MRE	Minor Rock Edict
MS	Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā
PE	Pillar Edict
Rām	Rāmāyaṇa
RE	Rock Edict
ṚV	Ṛgveda
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
ŚBK	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Kānvīya Recension
ŚBM	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Mādhyandina Recension
SN	Saṃyutta Nikāya
ŚU	Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad
TB	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
TS	Taittirīya Saṃhitā
UMS	Umā-Maheśvara Saṃvāda
V, VDhS	Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra
VS	Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā
YK	Yājñavalkya-kāṇḍa
YP	Yuga Purāṇa
YV	Yajur Veda

Other Abbreviations

ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute
BEFEO	Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient
CIS	Contributions to Indian Sociology
EJVS	Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies
HR	History of Religions Journal
IIJ	Indo-Iranian Journal
IJHS	International Journal of Hindu Studies
IT	Indologica Taurinensia
JAAR	Journal of the American Academy of Religion
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JAS	Journal of Asian Studies
JIABS	Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies
JIP	Journal of Indian Philosophy
JPTS	Journal of the Pali Text Society
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
JVS	Journal of Vaishnava Studies
KM	Kauśambī myth

MW	Monier-Williams' Sanskrit-English Dictionary
RO	Rocznik Orientalistyczny
RoSA	Religions of South Asia
WZKS	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Sudasiens
WZKSO	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Sud- und Ostasiens
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländishen Gesellschaft

Dharma

1

Introduction

More than for any other project I have undertaken, this one has made me feel that I should reread virtually everything on India I have ever read as well as everything I have written. It seems I have been interested in *dharma*, however lazily, for a long time. My primary interests in the Sanskrit epics always dovetailed with *dharma*, to the point where my 2001 book, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: The Education of the Dharma King*, put it in the subtitle. Fortunately, however, I could wait to 2005 to start the writing, for it could not have taken the form it has, before I was able to digest two works completed in 2004. The one I read first is Adam Bowles's dissertation (2004), now revised as a book (2007), which ranges over many of the same texts I do as background to his discussion of a section of the *Mahābhārata* on "*dharma* for times of distress." The one I read next is the landmark 2004 *Journal of Indian Philosophy* volume on *dharma*, conceptually spearheaded by Patrick Olivelle and now amplified further as a book titled *Dharma* (Olivelle 2009). Until quite recently, scholarly work on *dharma* has been rather scattered, and it has been possible to sustain and even promote a nebulous ahistorical view of the term that many still have today. Thanks to works of this sort, that has changed.

The findings of this book do, however, differ on some points from those of Bowles and the authors in Olivelle's collection. Researching *dharma* has proved a rich opportunity to advance new and unexpected lines of inquiry in areas that have long preoccupied

me: the Sanskrit epics, the historical situations of their composition, and the ways they come to be received and "read" in Indian culture. But I would like to mention four findings at this introductory point because they came to me quite independently of my 2004 readings and each as something of a surprise.

The first finding became part of the plan of a shorter book (Hiltebeitel 2010), one that is now also titled *Dharma* and was written for undergraduate readers in a series that allows no footnotes. For that book, one piece of good fortune carries over to this one. This two-book project on *dharma* has given me the opportunity to put some breaks on a career provincialization that had too easily turned my attentions to Hinduism at the expense of Buddhism. In teaching the Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa's "Life of the Buddha," the *Buddhacarita*, for the first time in a new Fall 2004 course on South Asian Buddhism, I was impressed that Aśvaghoṣa's treatment of *dharma* was a Buddhist discourse frequently and insistently couched in Brahmanical terms. Aśvaghoṣa deploys numerous new Brahmanical usages about *dharma* that cannot be traced to anything earlier than the Brahmanical *dharma* texts of our classical period. This opened the idea that Aśvaghoṣa was not only taking the opportunity to describe how and why the Buddha searched to discover the "true *dharma*" but was putting *dharma* to use as a term of civil discourse with his Brahmanical counterparts (both people and texts). This finding remains engrained in this larger book as a Leitmotif, and not only where it treats Buddhism. It also suggests ways to interpret facets of Brahmanical *dharma* texts as well, including *dharma* debates mentioned in the *dharmasūtras* and narrative scenes in the Sanskrit epics.

Of course I wish my short book well, but this was always the real book I was writing, and the three remaining findings came with it. The second, stimulated by Frederick M. Smith's monumental study of possession in India (2006), is that I believe it is now possible to find an answer in our classical sources, and particularly in the *Mahābhārata*, to a question I should have asked more persistently some time ago. In the Tamil cult of the epic's heroine, Draupadī, Draupadī's temples are often called Dharmarāja temples with reference to her husband, King Yudhiṣṭhira Dharmarāja, who is called "Dharma" (Tamil Tarumaṉ) for short. How does Dharma personified as a god come to be a possessing deity? Dharma as a possessing agency can be no more than a brief focus of this book, but I believe it is one that opens certain unexpected vistas.

The third and fourth findings are ones that shape this book as a whole. As a newly emergent discourse, *dharma* could give a "hold" on a world that was changing. Some months after writing a conference paper titled "Why *Itihāsa*? New Possibilities and Limits in Considering the *Mahābhārata* as History"[1] that

1. Hiltebeitel 2009*b*; the short conference version appears retitled as Hiltebeitel 2010*b*; the full study with the original title is chapter 4 in Hiltebeitel 2011-*a*. The discussion of the *Yuga Purāṇa* is revised for chapter 7.

discussed the treatment of *yugas* or "ages" in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Yuga Purāṇa*, it dawned on me that the texts I was treating were engaged not only in a kind of civil discourse but that such discourse was itself concerned with interpreting *dharma* over time. My first task in centering this book on that topic was to write chapters 6 and 7 using that title. This involved comparing a discussion of Buddhist prophesies of the end of the *dharma* that I had already written directly with the *Yuga Purāṇa*'s Brahmanical prophesies about the decline of the *dharma*—a comparison facilitated by the fact that both are ex eventu prophesies of some of the same historical events. The rest, to make a long story short, is history: a history of how classical Indian *dharma* texts envision *dharma* over time and try to present it—to borrow a phrase from an American president who at least got to make it a good campaign slogan—as change you can believe in. Chapters 6 and 7 will now be this book's thematic pivot, toward which treating the Aśokan edicts as an historical watershed in chapter 2 will set our initial bearings.

The fourth finding is that by treating certain texts within a concentrated period and proposing that they be approached within one historical narrative, *dharma* would prove to be an historically dispositive term. That is, it would prove to entail an unfolding set of legal, narrative, and religious projects and strategies by which it is possible to cut through these texts to show productive ways to envision their chronology. More than one scholar has described any and every relative dating of classical Indian texts as "a house of cards." But the metaphor stacks the deck in favor of a textual practice that considers every text as itself layered in principle with interpolations and strata, such that the deck is virtually infinite and never far from being toppled by attributions of interpolations or strata in one text that might reverse its until-then assumed priority or posteriority to others. I regard this method as having had its field day and to have pushed its ambitious agenda too indiscriminately. Of the texts that will be central to this book, including the critical editions of the two Sanskrit epics and *The Laws of Manu*, the only one I regard as having demonstrable layers is the *Baudhāyana Dharma Śūtra*. For the rest, I regard them as texts that are best considered whole. This means, as I will outline in a moment, that we will be playing with a deck of fourteen or so cards. A house of fourteen cards can, I think, be put in some fairly stable order.

A. Classical *Dharma* Texts and Their Relative Dating

In recognizing that *dharma* has a history, a book on the topic must thus offer a textual chronology, however provisional it may be. The term comes to the foreground in a classical period, a span from between about 300 BCE and 500 CE. From ca. 1500 to 300 BCE, from the early hymns of the *Ṛgveda* through the philosophical speculations of the Upaniṣads, no text is

predominantly about *dharma*. "*Dharma* texts" take us into a post-Vedic "classical" period. The terms in quotes call for some discussion.

The term "classical" is not without its problems. It is, for instance, conventional to speak of Gupta classicism in association with the notion that there was a "Hindu renaissance" or "golden age" during the Gupta dynasty (ca. 320–497 CE). But as Romila Thapar cautions, India has just as plausibly had two other "classical" ages, Mauryan and Mughal, while regional cultures like the south Indian Cholas have fashioned classical periods as well (Thapar 2002, 280–82). Yet it is not new to speak of the Maurya to the Gupta period as classical. Indian nationalist historians have done so to foster the notion of an age centered on the emergence of post-Vedic classical Sanskrit, which probably takes us back even before the Mauryans to the grammarian Pāṇini (ca. 350 BCE). In any case, my usage, like Thapar's, is pluralistic, but in a different sense. It is problematic to think of a single classical period in which classical texts were being composed in more than one language (Sanskrit, Pāli, Prākrit, Tamil) and by proponents of contending Brahmanical and Śramaṇic ideologies. Also, the Mauryan period certainly could be called classical for Sri Lankan Buddhists, and probably was so, well into the first millennium CE, for Indian Buddhist communities as well. We will see evidence for this in chapter 13.

My point, however, is not just to pluralize the classical but to use the term to identify a period in which the term *dharma* takes on discursive breadth and density across languages and religious preferences: a period in which this term provided a forum for the articulation and contestation of new norms. While we must acknowledge that the Buddha would be preclassical in this sense, since he is pre-Mauryan, and would almost certainly have said a good deal about *dharma*, the actual words attributed to him on the subject in the Pāli canon, which are conventionally considered to be our earliest window into what he might have said, are, as we shall see in chapter 4, considered to reflect a state of society not earlier than around 300 BCE: that is, early Mauryan. This coincides or overlaps with the third-century BCE dates that have recently gathered some consensus for the composition of the earliest Brahmanical treatises on *dharma, the dharmasūtras*. From this vantage point, one may, and I believe should, view the earliest Buddhist and Brahmanical *dharma* texts as framed within a wider discourse about *dharma* that we may call classical as it unfolds from the Mauryas through the Guptas. But it is really between the time of the Mauryans and the Kuṣāṇas (the Guptas' main immediate precursors) that classical discourse on *dharma* produced not only multiple texts, both Brahmanical and Buddhist, but multiple new genres. We begin to see baroque tendencies in the Kuṣāṇa period when Mahāyāna Buddhist authors expand the *sūtra* format in texts like the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra* to have the Buddha endorse and utter fantastical novelties about *dharma*

that become more classical in China than in India. The Gupta production of Purāṇic texts could then also be called neoclassical or baroque, though in the different sense of normalizing Brahmanical *dharma* in a more systematized cosmology. Rather than being *dharma* texts per se, they are texts that move classical Brahmanical *dharma* in the direction of an infinitely flexible ideology: a familiar "sociocosmic" idea of cosmic order, with its tool kit of fully worked out chronometries about vast units of time (*kalpas*, *yugas*, *manvantaras*) and genealogically based history (solar and lunar dynasties), that can take up the charge of fitting classical Hindu *dharma* categories to changing political, geographical, and social conditions. Meanwhile, when classical usages universalize the term *dharma*, regard it as a transcendent value, or project it as the term that defines the truth claims of a particular religious or civilizational trajectory, they offer new constructs that cannot be traced back into prior Vedic texts or the actual word of the Buddha, much less the teachings of previous Buddhas. Universalistic claims about an "eternal *dharma*" have been projected on the past by both Hindus and Buddhists, but such claims are ways of interpreting the past, and beyond that, the universe. No preclassical texts use the term *dharma* in such a fashion.

We must thus identify the texts that participate in this *dharma* discourse and offer some idea of their chronology within the formative Mauryan to Kuṣāṇa period. In keeping our main focus on texts that can be called "*dharma* texts," including a few that I will call minor classical *dharma* texts in chapter 7, I will be foregrounding ones that put *dharma* front and center as a (if not *the*) main subject that concerns them, and that are unimaginable without that subject having become something of a cause celebre, indeed an intertextual civilizational discourse, with a lot at stake over its interpretation and implementation, and also its *enjoyment*. This definition is meant to include the Sanskrit epics and Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*, and to distinguish our *dharma* texts from some "shastric" or instructional texts on other Brahmanical sciences of the period which, while they treat *dharma* as highly important relative to their main topics, do not treat it *as* their main topic. For example, the *Arthaśāstra* looks in on *dharma* from the standpoint of the political pursuit of wealth and power; the *Kāmasūtra* from the standpoint of erotics; and the *Naṭyaśāstra* from that of aesthetics. Likewise, Patañjali's commentary on Pāṇini suggests what Ashok Aklujkar (2004) calls a "grammarian's *dharma*"; and the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* makes *dharma* into a transcendent category with which to interpret Vedic ritual. We shall work these approaches into our discussion at points where they are pertinent, but with the consideration that their viewpoints arise from engagement—mutual engagement, no doubt—with what is going on in the *dharma* texts themselves. They attempt to define the discourse from carefully refined "infradharmic" or "metadharmic" (notably the Mīmāṃsā) positions from within or above the fray.

I have thus begun by mentioning major *dharma* texts and minor ones. Major ones are those that lend themselves to the cumulative discourse on *dharma* that I have been discussing. Minor ones seem to be spin-offs of this discourse, with more specialized and limited outreach in time and space. The *Yuga Purāṇa* seems to have been composed for astronomers. And the Buddhist prophesies of the end of the *dharma* had greater impact in China and Tibet than in India, whose history and geography they reflected and where at least some of them were composed.

This book will be concerned primarily with twelve major *dharma* texts or "text groups" (groupings of collected or thematically related *dharma* texts) produced during our classical heydays between the Mauryas and the Kuṣāṇas, including the Aśokan edicts, which may be called a group of *dharma* texts. The following chart lists, in my provisional sequential order, both the twelve major and two minor *dharma* texts or text groups that I will be discussing, and breaks them down into four chronologically defined text clusters. Among the minor classical *dharma* texts that will be discussed in chapter 7, I mention here (with an *et cetera*) only one—probably the earliest—of the Buddhist texts that will be compared to the *Yuga Purāṇa*. This is the *Prophesy of Kātyāyana*, a text in both

Major classical "*Dharma* Texts"	Minor classical "*Dharma* Texts"
Cluster 1 (early Maurya):	
1. The Aśokan edicts	
2. *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*	
3. Buddhist Nikāyas	
Cluster 2 (later Maurya):	
4. Buddhist Abhidharma	
5. Buddhist Vinaya	
6. *Gautama Dharmasūtra*	
7. *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*	
Cluster 3 (Śuṅga-Kaṇva or slightly later):	
8. *Mahābhārata*	
9. *Rāmāyaṇa*	
10. *Manu Smṛti* or *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (*The Laws of Manu*)	
Cluster 4 (post-Kaṇva to early Kuṣāṇa):	
11. *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*	1. *Yuga Purāṇa*
12. Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*	2. *Prophesy of Kātyāyana*, etc.

prose and verse versions that were probably composed around the late first to early second century CE, possibly in Central Asia.

As to text clusters, the notion carries different weight in each usage. Cluster 1 shows only that certain early texts and text collections are relatively contemporary. Since the earliest Buddhist literature may reflect early Mauryan conditions, since the earliest *dharmasūtras* cannot be dated precisely with reference to Aśoka, and since Aśoka's *dharma* campaign itself went on for nearly forty years, these earliest texts can be clustered together without trying to date them further relative to each other. Cluster 2 is a rather amorphous one at best. It contains large Buddhist collections that come to be known as "Baskets," in which some of the texts included are surely older than the redactions of the collections themselves. As mentioned in the last section, the *dharmasūtra* of *Baudhāyana* also appears to be the product of cumulative redactions,[2] but this is probably not the case for that of *Gautama*, which looks like a single prose composition. Even more amorphous is Cluster 4, which would appear to have nothing more uniting it than afterthoughts. Only in the case of Cluster 3 do we have a direct rapport between the texts themselves. For the two epics and *The Laws of Manu* (henceforth *Manu*), the Śuṅga period of rule by Brahmin kings has long had its attractions (see Witzel 2006, 482). But while some rapport between these texts has been widely acknowledged, they have been taken to present intractable inter-referential problems. I will be urging that we consider a new approach, which I will get back to in a moment. First, though, since the two epics and *Manu* will be most important for us by the criterion of their impact, literary complexity as poems, and the interpretative challenges they pose, it will be worth briefly summarizing their treatments of *dharma* along with that of the other great poem we will be discussing, Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*.

The vast *Mahābhārata* is said to have been composed in 100,000 verses by the sage or Ṛṣi Vyāsa, who frequently enters the story as a grandfather of the protagonists. It features *dharma* in three main ways: in didactic sections, in substories listened to and sometimes told by heroes and heroines, and in its main story. But Dharma is also a deity who sires one of the heroes, the eldest of the five Pāṇḍava brothers named Yudhiṣṭhira. From very early on, even before he becomes king, Yudhiṣṭhira is called Dharmarāja, "the Dharma King," which is also an epic epithet for Yama as the god of death and otherworldly justice. The main story is about a dynastic crisis where two sets of cousins, the five more noble Pāṇḍavas headed by Yudhiṣṭhira and the more wicked hundred Kauravas led by the ever-intransigent Duryodhana, go to war over their divided kingdom after a dicing game in which Yudhiṣṭhira has

2. See Olivelle 1981, 268 n. 23.

gambled away the five brothers' wife-in-common, Draupadī, and the other four Pāṇḍavas have sworn to avenge the humiliations and abuse she received from Duryodhana and some other Kauravas. As in the dice match, so too in the war, *dharma* is repeatedly said to be "subtle," and in the battle, dharmic and adharmic acts are committed on both sides. Characters are often delineated through the dilemmas they face in puzzling their way to righteous yet still ambiguous solutions. The Pāṇḍavas are helped in this, and ultimately to victory, by both the intervening author and by Kṛṣṇa, who also speaks authoritatively on *dharma* throughout, and especially to the middle Pāṇḍava named Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa's special friend, in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, "The Song of the Lord," which is considered by many to be this epic's centerpiece. Both Vyāsa and Kṛṣṇa are said to be a divine incarnations.

The *Rāmāyaṇa*, of nearly 20,000 verses, is attributed to the Ṛṣi Vālmīki. With much less didactic material and fewer substories for prominent characters to learn from, it focuses on *dharma* primarily through the adventures of King Rāma and his wife Sītā, who are presented as paragons of *dharma*—though not without episodes that raise questions of their meeting its expectations and demands. Rāma exemplifies *dharma* to perfection at least in all his relations with his father and brothers, if not so certainly elsewhere—most notably with Sītā and with a monkey named Vālin. It is his perfect allegiance to the truth of his father's word that motivates him to undertake fourteen years of exile to the forest, where Sītā is abducted by the demon king Rāvaṇa. Vālmīki's interventions in the story are far less frequent than Vyāsa's but no less momentous, since he gives refuge to Sītā in his hermitage after Rāma has banished her even while she is pregnant, helps her raise their twin sons, trains them to sing the *Rāmāyaṇa* before Rāma so that he hears his own story, and then, after Rāma recognizes his sons and asks to see their mother, brings Sītā before him for her final adieu. Like Kṛṣṇa, Rāma is a divine incarnation. But unlike Kṛṣṇa, he thinks he is only human.

The Laws of Manu, of 2,675 verses, features only two named characters and an anonymous host of Ṛṣis. The Ṛṣis ask Manu, who is also known as a primal sage and king in both epics, to instruct them in *dharma*, and after Manu tells them about the creation of the world up to the emergence of humans and their organization into castes, he then asks his pupil, the sage Bhṛgu, to continue on his behalf and present Manu's teachings, which then proceed from the sources of *dharma* to all variety of implementations.

Finally, the *Adventure of the Buddha* has over 2,000 verses, of which only about the first half survive in Sanskrit. It tells the story of the Buddha's life from his conception through his great departure from his father's royal city, to his enlightenment, the founding of his order, and his final *nirvāṇa*, and

concludes with a homage to Aśoka Maurya. The *Buddhacarita* is the only one of these four works to be by a historically identifiable poet. Yet as we shall see in chapter 13, Aśvaghoṣa names Vyāsa and Vālmīki as precursors, and seems to know both epics both broadly and well, and he probably also knew *Manu*.

There is, however, one more text that will come under discussion: the *Harivaṃśa*, which is known mainly for narrating supplementary information about Kṛṣṇa that the *Mahābhārata* did not fully if at all include. It is certainly, like that epic and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, a *dharma* text. I did not list the *Harivaṃśa* in our chart. But since, as we shall see, the *Mahābhārata* calls it and its *Bhaviṣya Parvan* (the *Harivaṃśa*'s concluding unit in its Pune Critical Edition) "appendices" (*khilas*) of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Harivaṃśa* could have been mentioned in the same cluster as the *Mahābhārata*, along with the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Manu*. Indeed, once we begin discussing the *Harivaṃśa* in chapters 7, 12, and 13, we will meet new intertextual evidence from two of our classical *dharma* texts, the *Yuga Purāṇa* and the *Buddhacarita*, that could place the *Harivaṃśa* in that cluster chronologically: perhaps "late" in it but still somehow within it, and thus earlier than is usually thought. While such evidence will encourage an hypothesis, it is best for now to let it arise in context and refrain from prematurely clustering this "appendix." The topic is elusive, and more work needs to be done.

B. Three Critical Editions

Aśvaghoṣa, from the first or second century CE, thus strengthens our case for looking at the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and *Manu* as a significant cluster, since, as will be brought out in chapter 13, he probably did so himself. In this cluster, however, let me indicate that I view the *Mahābhārata* as likely a little earlier than the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Manu*, and also as possibly overlapping them during its slightly longer period of composition (I have proposed that the *Mahābhārata* was composed over no more than two generations by a committee working between 150 BCE and the turn of the millennium).[3] Leaving specifics of such dating for fuller discussion beginning in chapters 5, this relative chronology does call for some preliminary clarification of the position I take on the implications of the critical editions of these three highly prominent *dharma* texts.

As anyone who knows these three texts at all well can see, I have summarized them in ways that reflect the breadth of their critical editions, and in ways that go well beyond what most scholars—including some who have taken part

3. Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 20–21; 2004*a*. Although I do not follow him on either dating (see chapter 5), Olivelle also makes a reasonable argument linking *Manu* and portions of the *Mbh* with Kuṣāṇa times (2005*a*, 24–25).

in editing and translating their critical editions, and others who strongly advocate the use of those editions—have said when summarizing them or assessing what they think would have been basic or original to them.[4] There has always been the assumption that the epics should be about conflicts between mainly male grown-ups whose adventures lead up to, and end with, a triumphant good fight;[5] and that *Manu* should be about the law. Anything else in them has been fair game for the so-called higher criticism and its excavatory strategies of positing stages and calling passages interpolations. I have cited elements from the frame stories of all three texts, yet frame stories are among the first things to be deemed unepical or nonlegal, and thus extraneous.[6] As regards the two epics, I have cited substories and didactic components, which have likewise come under the axe, as have stories of the heroes' youths and postwar aftermaths.[7] Divine paternity, mentioned in the case of Yudhiṣṭhira but extensive in both epics along with other kinds of divine and demonic incarnation, has also looked belated and suitable for eviction,[8] were it not that it would strip the main stories.[9] Finally, where I mention the divinity of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, and moreover that of Vyāsa, I refer to passages typically excised because they have to do with *bhakti*, devotion. On *bhakti*, James Fitzgerald and John Brockington have done the most recently to reinforce settled opinions.[10]

Since Fitzgerald's views are currently the most frequently quoted, we may take his repeated dismissals of *bhakti* in the *Mahābhārata* as late and "Gupta"

4. Compare my summaries of the two epics in Hiltebeitel 2006*c* and 2006*d*, which also work from the complexities of their critical editions, but more expansively than the brief summaries above, with Fitzgerald 2004*c* on the *Mahābhārata* and Brockington and Brockington 2006, ix–xxx on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. More attentive to the complexities raised by the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s critical edition is the summary in Goldman and Sutherland (Goldman 2004).

5. See my discussion (1999*a*, 38–39) of the views of John D. Smith that the "epic world is essentially a male world" and that goddesses in epics are later developments (1989, 182, 188–89).

6. For the *Mbh* frame, see Grünendahl 1997, critiqued in Hiltebeitel 2006*a*; Oberlies 1998, critiqued in Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 93 n. 5. The *Rāmāyaṇa* frame, introduced in that epic's *upodghāta* or "Preamble" and circled back to in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* (Book 7), falls victim to the assumption that the text's allegedly predivinized "core" is found in Books 2–6. Olivelle 2005*a*, 88–92 sees most of *Manu*'s first framing chapter as added in nine "excurses," though not the frame story as such involving Manu, Bhṛgu, and the Ṛṣis. On frame excision, see also Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*e*.

7. On substories being within the *Mahābhārata*'s archetypal design, see Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, forthcoming-*d*, and Biardeau 1979, 120 and n. 4. With reservations about the lateness of the "didactic," see Bowles 2007, 34–35; 2009; Brodbeck 2010*a*. Cf. Rabault 2004 on opposition to Joseph Dahlmann's earlier views on the didactic. On the epic ending shortly after the war, see Tokunaga 2005*b* and 2009*b*, as critiqued by Brodbeck 2010*a*, 159–60.

8. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 164 n. 118 on Winternitz 1933–34, van Buitenen 1973, and Bigger 1998 viewing *Mbh* 1.189 on "The Five Former Indras" as silly, isolated, and thus arguably late even though the critical edition includes it. For renewed discussion, see chapter 12.

9. Thus Fitzgerald concedes divine paternity in the *Mahābhārata*'s "initial development as the Pāṇḍava epic" (2004*c*, 54)—a notion he follows up with a theory of the Pāṇḍavas' "invention" (2007*b*); see chapter 7.

10. See Hiltebeitel 2004*a*, 2005*d* on Fitzgerald 2001, 2003, and 2004*a*; Hiltebeitel 1999*c* and 2001*a*, 22–23 on Brockington 1998.

as emblematic. Here is what he says, in an essay meant to introduce the *Mahābhārata*, about the congeries of elements that accompany *bhakti* into the text after a "main *Mahābhārata*" had undergone its first written redaction:[11] "in later centuries subsequent redactors wove together meaningfully many of the new religious ideas (such as elements of Śaivism, the worship of the goddess, *bhakti*, the theory of the *yugas*, and others) that emerged into prominence in India between the time of that original development and the time that it became more or less fixed (some time between 300 to 450 CE)" (2004*c*, 54).

Readers of this book should be prepared to consider evidence that these "new religious ideas" were already old by Gupta times because the *Mahābhārata* had woven them meaningfully into its archetypal text about four or five centuries earlier. The critical editions of the epics give no grounds whatsoever for any such excisions, and those who want to maintain them have had to continually reinvent their reasons for doing so with no cumulative results, only cumulative assumptions.[12] I thus advocate a new approach, or better, continue to advocate one that is no longer so new, which I have been developing since about 1992, and call my literary turn (see Hiltebeitel 2005*c*, 81–83; Adluri and Bagchee 2011). Since I was working at that time on the *Mahābhārata*, I describe this turn first as it bears on that epic, but I also consider it to apply in basic ways to the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Manu* as well. Where the Pune Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata* keeps faithfully to its criteria for inclusion and exclusion,[13] I take

11. Fitzgerald 2003, 811 and n. 32. Fitzgerald grants that "main *Mahābhārata*" is a "vague expression." Bronkhorst (in press) is attracted to the idea, but only to provide him with a long time for interpolations, as he sees them, and without considering the "main *Mahābhārata*'s" narrative implications. Fitzgerald would seem to have coined the term, in preference to the often-used "main story," as one that admits to a text. Fitzgerald agrees with me that the first (for him, pre-Gupta) redaction, his "main *Mahābhārata*," would already have been a written text (814–15). One tip-off that this construct is unsuccessful and really forced is Fitzgerald's concession to admit into this "main *Mahābhārata*" the "'black, covert' characters of the three Kṛṣṇas," namely, Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, Kṛṣṇa Draupadī, and Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana as "'dark,' 'obscure,' or 'secret' (*kṛṣṇa*) holy agents" who are "representative of the world's Vedic Brāhmaṇs" (2004*c*, 56), with Vyāsa further as "the mysterious (*kṛṣṇa*) agent of Brāhmaṇism" (61), while rejecting as "late" not only *bhakti* episodes that link the 'three Kṛṣnas" together but also the "author" trope of Vyāsa as developed in the *Mahābhārata*'s frame narratives (see Fitzgerald 2003, 815–17). On the "three Kṛṣṇas," cf. Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 60–76.

12. Brodbeck 2010*a*, 189, n., citing Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 163, finds it one of my "most telling criticisms against the differentiation of textual layers within the *Mahābhārata* . . . that the results are not cumulative." The most ingenious assumption meant to support continued research into prior strata has been offered by Bigger (1998; 2002) and Fitzgerald (2001, 68), who call the archetype reconstituted by the Pune Critical Edition a "normative redaction," implying that once it became the set text, it submerged others that preceded it. Yet whereas Bigger posits a "fixed oral transmission before the normative redaction was compiled" (24), Fitzgerald holds that there would probably have been a prior written redaction (2003, 811 and n. 32). I agree with Fitzgerald that the first "redaction" would have been written and with Bigger that the first written version would be the one approximated by the Critical Edition archetype, but I do not concur with either of them that a secondary "normative redaction" left prior traces of large scale interpolations to be divined by higher criticism.

13. For balanced discussion, see Sutherland 1992; Brockington 1998, 56–67; Bigger 2002; Mehendale 2009; Brodbeck 2009*a*, 3–12; 2010*a*, 154–57. For fuller consideration of the Pune Critical Edition and its critics, see Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*a*.

it to be a largely successful reconstitution of the *Mahābhārata* as a work of written literature[14] whose literary experiments, symbolic and philosophical complexities, thematic consistencies, and even its jarring juxtapositions and eye-opening inconsistencies are sufficiently explained by multiple authors working under a single inspired authorly design. The archetype uncovered by the Pune Critical Edition does not encourage speculation that it reconstitutes only a secondary "Gupta redaction" expanded from a less ample and entirely hypothetical earlier version, whether written or orally "fixed,"[15] behind it.

As I have done in various other writings, I will, in this book, sometimes draw attention to the merits of the text of the *Mahābhārata*'s critical edition in getting us back to what I would now call a baseline *Mahābhārata* from the timespan I have mentioned.[16] I thus do not share the view of many that the *Mahābhārata* critical edition is no more than a tool for renewed excavation. There seem to be three main ideas that run repeatedly through criticisms of the Pune Critical Edition: that it does not represent the fluidity and orality of the *Mahābhārata* tradition; that it used Western methods that were inappropriate to Indian texts; and that it is not a traditional text but is instead "no text." In an article with the phrase "no text" in its title, Sally Sutherland (1992) assesses the critical editions of both epics. Raising these three points, she concludes that "such evidence" does not warrant that we "turn away from these editions and regret them as dinosaurs of orientalism" (1992, 88). Yet she offers evidence only on the "no text" charge, and that only with regard to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, finding "numerous instances where the editors . . . have constructed a story" that is not found anywhere outside of the reconstituted text. She suggests that the *Rāmāyaṇa* editors may have been attempting to meld popular variants (86–87). On the other two points, there can be no evidence for her claims that both epics survived in oral form for over a thousand years before their earliest "exemplars" (85, 87). Sutherland hints that

14. For the *Mahābhārata* as written, and with regard to "oral theory," see Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, 7–8; 2001*a*, 2–4, 18–24; 2005*c*. On orality and writing as they bear on the canonization and transmission of early Buddhist sources, but weighted to demonstrate orality, see Veidlinger 2006, 17–62. One might hypothesize from his evidence that Buddhists self-consciously weight their written historiography toward orality at "originary" or "founding moments" (see 24–28, 34–36, 43–54, 61). So, in my view, do the Sanskrit epics in their constructive fictions about Sanskrit-speaking "bards" (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 4, 13 n. 31, 96–106; 2005*c*, 84, 89, 94). There is no Indian evidence of an epic genre—not to menation *oral* epic—during the Vedic or pre-Mauryan period.

15. See n. 12 above. Cf. Doniger 2009*a*, 260, giving the *Mahābhārata* six centuries to have been composed "before the Guptas"; van Buitenen (1978, 145–54), regarding its completion as most likely post-Gupta. Bigger also thinks his "normative redaction" does not require a "famous dynasty" to have produced it (2002, 27). The point is that we have little reason to suppose Gupta patronage of any *Mahābhārata* redaction.

16. I arrive at the term "baseline text" in Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*d*, one of four essays written since completing this book (see also Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*a*, -*b*, and -*g*) that carry forward my argumentation on these matters. See also Adluri and Bagchee 2011. Also affirming an important critical edition reading, see Austin 2009, as discussed in chapter 12 § A.

Vishnu S. Sukthankar's sense for things Indian may have kept him on track, and favors his view (as General Editor of the Pune Critical Edition and editor of its first and third volumes) that "even in its early phase the *Mahābhārata* tradition must have been not uniform and simple but multiple and polygenous" (Sukthankar 1933, lxxix). She prefers this to Franklin Edgerton's view (as editor of volume 2) that "every line of the text once had a definite, precise form, even though we are frequently uncertain about just what that form was. It is not an indefinite literature we are dealing with but a definite literary composition (Edgerton 1944, xxxvi–xxxvii). Yet I think Edgerton was more reliable on this point than Sukthankar (Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 24 n. 93).

Unlike Sutherland, Wendy Doniger and Madeleine Biardeau have taken these three issues as grounds to reject the Pune Critical Edition, each offering unfortunate broadsides against it. Since I more often than not agree with these two scholars, and with Georges Dumézil and David Shulman,[17] who concur with them, though more casually, it is worth attempting to clarify my differences with the four of them on the merits of the Pune Critical Edition. I will show at points in chapters 9 and 13 how Shulman and Biardeau have led readers down little blind alleys when preferring to work from Southern or Northern "Vulgate" editions.

It is important to recognize that both Doniger and Biardeau approach the *Mahābhārata* from the standpoint of having first worked on the purāṇas. From this vantage point, we can understand how each brings an avowed preference for "tradition" and multiple variants over any text.

Doniger's stance can be traced back to her early work. In *The Origins of Evil* (O'Flaherty 1976), which she now speaks of as her "second best book" (Reddy 2009), she submits the *Mahābhārata* and Hindu mythology more generally to a "heavy marination in historical periodization" (Hiltebeitel 1979, 270–72). According to Doniger, the *Mahābhārata*, as well as other narratives during its supposedly long period of development, can be traced through "three major trends: sacrifice, asceticism, and *bhakti*" (O'Flaherty 1976, 78). Building on this sense of the *Mahābhārata*'s longue durée, which can be longer still for Doniger when she sometimes invokes the Indo-Europeans, she speaks of the

17. See Shulman 2001, 25–26: "the attempt to pin down a precisely delimited text does not appear too promising, despite the existence today of a so-called 'critical edition.' " Here, Shulman prefers to cite from what he calls "the Southern Recension (SR) of the *Mahābhārata*, ed. P. P. S. Sastri (Madras, 1931–33)." Yet as the full title of Sastri's first volume—*The Mahābhārata Southern Recension, Critically Edited by P. P. S. Sastri* (1931)—shows, Sastri himself aspired to be editing a critical edition: "It is this want of a really representative text of the Southern Recension that has led the present Editor to undertake the task of a critical edition of the Southern Recension" (Sastri 1931, xiii). As Sukthankar's criticism makes clear (1942, xxxiv–xxxv), Sastri's critical edition of the Southern Recension was, for many reasons, not as good as the one Sukthankar himself was crafting (in star passages and appendices) as a provisional byproduct of his work on the full *Mahābhārata* critical edition. For example, Sastri used no Malayālam manuscript until the *Āraṇyakaparvan* (see Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*d*).

Mahābhārata as having "various recensions . . . even at the earliest stages of its composition"; and while granting that J. A. B. van Buitenen had good enough reasons to translate from it, she decries his choice to "approve of" it, since for her, it is "no text at all" (1978, 22). She wishes that van Buitenen had used his "excellent judgment" to select good interpolations to fold into his translation,[18] and holds that "any structural analysis of the epic would of course demand *all* available variants of the text" (23)—as if structural analysis were not also possible of the text the critical edition gives us. Now, thirty years later, she goes so far as to say that the *Mahābhārata* was always a "tradition" and was never a text (2009*a*, 263–64, 2009*b*). In her recent book *The Hindus: An Alternate History*, she upgrades an old encyclopedia analogy (critiqued in Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 161–63; 2005*c*, 88) to say the *Mahābhārata* is "like an ancient Wikipedia, to which anyone who knew Sanskrit, or who knew someone who knew Sanskrit, could add a bit here, a bit there" (2009*a*, 263–64). Then in a book review of John D. Smith's abridged translation from the critical edition (2009), she no longer allows for good reasons to work from it but goes overboard in decrying Smith's allegiance to it. After repeating most of the Wikipedia analogy but dropping its most improbable line about those "who knew someone who knew Sanskrit," she sees "a deeply patriarchal metaphor at the root of the whole idea of tracing text-stemmata." Finding "no trunk to this textual tree" (despite its patriarchal root) unless it is a banyan, she claims that "[t]here are several recensions of the *Mahabharata*, each preserved and cherished by a particular community" (no evidence for which is mentioned).[19] Having reassured us in her book that the epic is not the "monstrous chaos" once thought (2009*a*, 264), she now makes the critical edition the new monster: "The critical edition . . . is like Frankenstein's monster, pieced together from various scraps of different bodies; its only community is that of the Pune scholars, the Frankensteins" (2009*b*, 18). It is hard to see this recent assessment as going anywhere, unless it is backwards. So far Doniger's only advance is to have recognized that while she could get by in her book with the bit about those "who knew someone who knew Sanskrit," she should drop it from a scholarly book review.

Biardeau, on the other hand, offered her broadside against the *Mahābhārata* critical edition toward the beginning of her work on the epic (1968, 1970*a*,

18. Kulkarni 2009 ends his review of Doniger 2009*a*: "occasionally, one feels that, rather than dig deeper into the contradictions of history, she too, like her subjects [i.e., stories] stretching back over thousands of years, prefers just to tell one more story."

19. Biardeau also avers that the Northern Vulgate edition of Nīlakaṇṭha "became very popular" and "received a warmer welcome than the present critical edition" (1968, 121). She does not say where, when, or by whom it received this "warmer welcome." My experience in purchasing it in 1974, in the Kinjawadekar 1929–33 edition, was that it was out of print and available in Pune only from local specialists in Sanskrit books.

1970*b*), and since then returned to the topic only in asides.[20] In her debate over the merits of the critical edition with V. M. Bedekar, Biardeau also avers that “such a text never existed” as the one reconstituted (1968, 123). She brings up Dumézil’s preference for the Calcutta edition over the critical edition (Dumézil 1968, 34) to argue that the current western study of texts is more scientific than the “outdated” one implemented in the Pune text’s editors and defended by Bedekar (Biardeau 1970*a*, 180). Again, it is no coincidence that, as an Indo-Europeanist, Dumézil takes this similar stance. Yet one hardly needs to read between the lines to see that Biardeau’s debate was not so much with Bedekar and the mostly Indian editors of the Pune edition, whom she depicts as straddling an impossible allegiance to traditional Indian punditry and an “outdated” German philology, but with German philology itself. The third party in this debate is obviously French Indology. One sees this where Biardeau takes umbrage at Sukthankar’s dismissal of “my *paramaguru*” Sylvain Lévi,[21] who argued that, rather than continue reconstructing a critically edited text, Sukthankar would do better to reprint the northern Vulgate of Nīlakaṇṭha and show all the newly found variants along with it to let readers decide their own preferred readings (see Lévi 1929, 347; Sukthankar 1933, lxxxiii–lxxxiv; Biardeau 1968, 115–16).[22] Biardeau says that as a “result of the impact of . . . the dominant trend of Western Indian studies, that is, historical philology,” “modern pandits . . . in the name of science . . . have introduced the historical dimension into the realm of myth, where it cannot exist”[23] (1968, 122). Bedekar has the appropriate answer: “Even myths are studied scientifically by anthropologists. But here the matter is quite otherwise. Are mss [manuscripts] of different recensions and versions myths?” (1969, 223). The point is not whether one scientific method is right for all texts, but which methods are best for which texts. Over and over Biardeau lumps together the pair “epics and purāṇas” on the grounds that both begin as oral, and thus call for the one and the same type of open textual study. But the problem is not whether or in what way the Sanskrit epics and purāṇas have oral traditions behind them, but what impact those oral precursors would have had once those

20. Once she got past these exercises, Biardeau could be an astute critic of the critical edition where it failed to follow its own principles. See e.g. Biardeau 1979, 118 on Sukthankar’s reconstruction of the name Duḥṣanta based on the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*’s usage of Bharata Dauḥṣanti. As Mehendale 2009, 8 notes, the critical edition sought to avoid “emendations.”

21. Lévi taught on Indian religions when the 5th Section on Sciences Religieuses of the École Pratique des Hautes Études opened in 1886, which Biardeau was to direct a century later. See R. Rocher 2009, 639, and 635–38 on Lévi’s “barbs” against German scholarly hegemony. Biardeau 1968, 122 implies Indian subordination to German methods, as cited in my next sentence.

22. I agree with Bedekar’s defense of Sukthankar as to the shortsightedness and really the impossibility of such an approach, and van Buitenen’s critique of Biardeau for renewing it (see Bedekar 1969, 212–13; van Buitenen 1978, 152; Biardeau 1968, 119, 122–23). Lévi 1934 softens his critique.

23. Biardeau 1968 32. I reverse the order of the quotes.

texts were written.[24] With Biardeau, the problem with this frame of reference is twofold. First, an epic is not a *purāṇa*.[25] As Ludo Rocher demonstrates, there are excellent reasons to be dubious about critical editions of cross-purāṇic textual pieces like the *Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa*, and likewise of *purāṇas* themelves.[26] But none of these reasons hold for the *Mahābhārata* or *Rāmāyaṇa*, both of which—not to mince words—are, as the amplitude of their critical editions now demonstrates, epoch-changing monumental literary masterpieces. Second, as van Buitenen shows, Biardeau's exemplum to show the superiority of the Vulgate over the *Mahābhārata* critical edition by comparing two variants of the story of King Kārtavīrya Arjuna draws on quasi-purāṇic interpolations of the Vulgate to support her structuralist interpretation.[27]

Biardeau did, however, refine her views over the years on the question of the *Mahābhārata*'s primary orality. Whereas in her 1968 critique of the critical edition, she consigned oral *Mahābhārata* to "the bards (usually non-brahmins)" (1968, 116), in 2002, acknowledging that "Today, certain specialists think that it is materially impossible to regard [the *Mahābhārata*] as an oral composition because of its dimensions," she weighed in for orality in the name of Brahmins' memories, the possibility that they could conceive a work on this scale, and their

24. Although Bedekar does not question a single approach to both "epics and purāṇās," he does point out Sukthankar's view that the "problem" of the *Mahābhārata* was "sui generis" in comparison with Western texts (Bedekar 1969, 219–20).

25. Shulman raises a seeming problem here, saying the *Mahābhārata* "is '*itihāsa*' or, as it calls itself, '*itihāsapurāṇa*' (see 1.1.16–20)" (2001, 22). This reference is not in the baseline text of the Critical Edition or in anything in its apparatus around that point. The epic uses the compound only three time, and never to define itself: first in the dual (*itahāsapurāṇābhyām*) to say that itihāsa and purāṇa should "support the Veda" (1.1.203; van Buitenen 1973, 31); next in a plural describing topics studied by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu, and Vidura (1.102.18); and last—the only instance in the singular—describing Bhīṣma as knowing *itihāsapurāṇa* fully (12.50.34). Thapar also says the *Mahābhārata* is *itihāsapurāṇa* (1993, 136), and equally misleadingly that it is *kāvya* ([1999] 2002, 5–6). Cf. Pollock 2006, recognizing that the epic's *itihāsa* ("narrative of 'the way it once was' ") "genre identity is no trivial matter" (17), but still explaining it as *kāvya* (224) to accommodate it to his binary of culture/power, *kāvya/rājya*, poetry/polity (29–30). The epic is not self-identifed as *kāvya* until the interpolations in which Brahmā names it so and Gaṇeśa writes it down (*Mahābhārata* 1, Appendix 1, No. 1; see Hiltebeitel 2011*a*, 311).

26. L. Rocher 1986, 97–99 objects, with reference to Kirfel's work (1927) on the *Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa* or "Five Features of a Puraṇa," to the intent to "reconstruct an ideal Ur-text of any purāṇic passage" (97), and the assumption that "mini-purāṇas are more basic than their conglomerations into large purāṇas in the traditional sense" (98). "It goes without saying that, once one looks at purāṇas as purely oral tradition, as a tradition carried forward by individual story-tellers, and which is, therefore, authorless and anonymous, as a tradition only parts of which have accidentally been committed to writing,—it goes without saying that in that case critical editions based on the standard rules of textual criticism make little sense" (99). Indeed, the *Mahābhārata* cites a *Vāyu Purāṇa* at 3.189.14, though not any later one known by that name; similarly, *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* 2.24.5–6 cites an early *Bhaviṣyat Purāna* (see L. Rocher 1986, 85–86).

27. Van Buitenen 1978, 145–52. Biardeau's closing arguments become rather catch-as-catch-can. She chides Sukthankar for using the Bombay Edition rather than the critical edition for his 1942 lectures, missing the point that he could not have cited the critical edition because it was not yet complete. Having declared a preference for "more developed versions," she brings up the possibility of versions being "shortened (possibly according to the fees to be expected)." And in suggesting that "rather than reconstruct a single authentic text we had better published all regional versions" (Biardeau 1970*b*, 302–3), she raises the red herring of "inauthenticity."

habitation of a Vedic "universe of sounds" (Biardeau 2002, 2: 747–49). From bards to Brahmins is a considerable advance. The notion that the *Mahābhārata* goes back to a time when bards eulogized clan warriors has offered up a tribal conception of the early *Mahābhārata* (there seems to be no corresponding insistence on the tribal origins of the *Rāmāyaṇa*) that the Pune Critical Edition should help us to put to rest.[28] Since about 1947, the bardic component of the tribal hypothesis has sought help from so-called oral theory. But much as oral theory has enriched our awareness of performative aspects of *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* verse (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 19 and n. 74), it cannot take us back to pre-Brahmanical origins of these epics. As Biardeau's 2002 book makes clear in its title, the *Mahābhārata* is "a foundational text of Brahmanism." She and I just disagreed about whether it was composed orally or in writing.

I thus view the *Mahābhārata*'s Pune Critical Edition as having a more successful outcome—indeed, one more successful in uncovering a written archetype—than its first general editor Sukthankar could perceive. As studies by Thennilappuram Mahadevan show (2008, 2010), along with studies of mine that build upon his findings (2006*a*, forthcoming-*a*, forthcoming-*d*), we can posit that an early version of a *Mahābhārata* that would lie behind its shortest Northern Recension manuscript, which is in a Śāradā script,[29] would have been brought to south Indian Tamil country by Brahmins called Pūrvaśikhās (those who wear their tuft of hair in front) during the Sangam period, where, from its correspondences to the shortest Southern Recension manuscripts in Malayālam script, we can deduce and indeed date with good conviction the modifications that produced the earliest Southern Recension manuscripts. A sedulous and careful makeover by Brahmins who saw themselves as custodians of the *Mahābhārata*, yet who nonetheless wanted to spruce it up in ways they deemed useful and pertinent to their adopted south Indian milieu,[30] would have been accomplished before the Kaḷabhra Interregnum, ca. 300–500 CE. For at that point the Pūrvaśikhās split into two communities, one of which—the future Nambudiris in Kerala—would keep their eventual Malayālam version short; and the other, the Cōḻiya Pūrvaśikhās remaining in the Tamil country, would see their version in Grantha script overlaid with Northern Recension additions introduced by the next wave of Brahmins migrating from the north from the Pallava period on, called Aparaśikhās (those who wear their tuft in back).

28. See Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*a* on this premise of an originally tribal *Mahābhārata*, drawing on Adluri and Bagchee forthcoming particularly for their discussion of the views of the uncle and nephew pair of Adolph Holtzmanns, but also noting that many scholars outside Germany have also promoted it, notably Hopkins [1901] 1969, 386, 397–98.

29. Mahadevan 2010 calls it the "*Śāradā text," that is, the "proto-Śāradā text."

30. On these points, see Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*d*, a study of the Southern Recension's major alterations of the *Śakuntalā Upākhyāna*, building on the astute insights of Sukthankar 1933, xxxii–xxxvi.

As Mahadevan has noted, his findings for the *Mahābhārata* critical edition hold implications for the Baroda Critical Edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, whose early editors ignored the implications of the similar relative brevity of Malayālam *Rāmāyaṇa* manuscripts, making it impossible for the last editors involved in the project to do any more than acknowledge the seriousness of the oversight (2008, 99–100 n. 2). Meawhile, Olivelle's critical edition of *Manu* simply does not involve a large apparatus of major passages dropped because they are not found in all the text's known manuscripts.[31] Indeed, Olivelle too seems to have taken a literary turn away from the assumptions of predecessors like Georg Bühler and E. W. Hopkins, who looked behind *Manu* for nuclear oral precursors. As we shall see in chapter 5, Olivelle, despite still labeling numerous passages as "excurses," by which he means interpolations, has discovered a "deep structure" in *Manu* that yields a literary text in four main sections (2004*b*, xxvii–xxx; cf. 2005*a*, 7–11). I think what Olivelle calls "excurses" may be thought of more profitably as segments where *Manu* resorts to topics that take it beyond the legal tradition preceding it, and that in such cases *Manu* may sometimes be drawing on other knowledge traditions or even sources. In any case, Olivelle says that *Manu*'s "deep structure" opens the possibility that, "If not by an individual, then [*Manu*] must have been composed by a 'strong chairman of a committee' with the help of research assistants who carried out his plan" (2005*a*, 7; cf. 19, 26). One wonders if Doniger still holds to her view that *Manu* was "composed in increments over several centuries" (1991, xliv–xlv); "a hotchpotch" (lv); its "apparent inconsistencies" being "the natural outgrowth of centuries"; and a work whose "*śloka* verse form" suggests orality (lvii). More recently, she seems to have acceded to Olivelle's dating of *Manu* to about 100 CE (2009a, 202; cf. 26), but she does not reconsider her view of the text.

C. Paradigm Shifts on *Dharma*: The Case of the *Mahābhārata*

I cannot expect scholars invested in incrementalist approaches to drop their investments. I can only urge them to keep an open mind to the possibility that a literary approach will shed new light on some intertextual problems. Scholarly orthodoxies are probably harder to challenge after over a century of entrenchment and popularization than views on *dharma* in classical India, which could admit change over time if not in essence. Every chapter in this book will

31. "All the mss. and commentaries of the *MDh* contain basically the same text. The additional verses found in some can easily be detected. There are no major recensions of the *MDh* giving longer or shorter versions of the text, as, for example, in the case of the two epics" (Olivelle 2005*a*, 374).

wrestle with some aspect of that tension. But since by chapters 5 and 6 it will have emerged that I regard one text, the *Mahābhārata*, as having been most effective in putting dharmic change on the table, and indeed in motivating change by doing so, I turn now to Bimal K. Matilal's innovative treatment of the *Mahābhārata* as the locus of a paradigm shift on *dharma*. Matilal's discussion occurs in a book of collected essays titled *Ethics and Epics* (2002) that was edited by Jonardan Ganeri. As Ganeri says in a luminous study of his own, citing one of Matilal's exemplary stories from the *Mahābhārata* about a fool named Kauśika, which will be cited below, "The idea that morality has a history is a difficult one" (Ganeri 2007, 91). This is a nice distillation of Matilal's argument. This examination of his insights will serve to preview some later chapters. I will be introducing Matilal's approach to Kṛṣṇa along with a view of the *Mahābhārata* that can be squared with it: Biardeau's idea that the epic's riposte to Buddhism was achieved by a "*bhakti* swerve" away from Brahmanical orthodoxy—a formulation I will open up in chapter 12. And in relating Matilal's comparison of the dharmic kings of the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, Yudhiṣṭhira and Rāma respectively, I open a comparison that I will pursue further in chapter 9.

It has emerged already that, for Vālmīki, Rāma's perfection in *dharma* lies not so much in embodying it, as Yudhiṣṭhira does as the god Dharma's son, as in exemplifying its rules; and when rules conflict, in discerning what he considers the higher value, which is always in accord with hierarchical and patriarchal norms, topped by the truth of his father's word. According to Matilal, the ethical virtues extolled in the *Rāmāyaṇa* are "nothing if not formalistic in character," by which Matilal means that they depend "upon the fulfillment of a formal promise: of a formal duty of a son to his father, of a husband to his wife, of a friend to his friend" (2002, 85). Rāma thus applies "rational thinking" to choices that at least he deems to be "only apparent." A "higher type of critical thinking," however, can come into play in "cases of genuine dilemma" where "the conflict is real" (68). Matilal finds guidance through such dilemmas from the "devious divinity" Kṛṣṇa whose "non-omnipotence" he offers in his "defence"—that he did what he could (99–104). As we shall see, Matilal wants to show that Kṛṣṇa resorts to a special kind of Archangelic rational argument.

Matilal's interest in Kṛṣṇa in connection with the "search for a rational basis for *dharma*" in India (2002, 74) is surprising, since Kṛṣṇa has more the reputation of an amoral Machiavellian trickster who is always ready to explain how his devious means justify ends such as victory that are also inscrutable divine ends of his own. Moreover, when Matilal says that "God was never cited as an authority on *dharma*" in India (*idem*), Kṛṣṇa looks like an exception,

particularly in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.[32] But I think Matilal's point can be well taken. One finds the *Gītā* in a text with lots of other jostling teachings, where people often disagree with Kṛṣṇa both directly and indirectly, and where what he says in the *Bhagavad Gītā* is never cited as authoritative anywhere else, at least in the *Mahābhārata*.[33]

Let us see how Matilal makes his case with his favorite instance, where "Kṛṣṇa intervened and became 'the Archangel' " (Matilal 2002, 27; cf. Ganeri 2005, 193–95). This is the convoluted war scene where Yudhiṣṭhira is distraught that Arjuna seems to be dallying once again, just as he did when it was a question of killing his guru Droṇa (see chapter 9 § E). This time Yudhiṣṭhira wants Arjuna to finish the job of killing Karṇa (the two are still yet to know that Karṇa is their eldest brother). Yudhiṣṭhira insults Arjuna's bow Gāṇḍīva, whereupon Arjuna, who had vowed to kill anyone who insulted Gāṇḍīva, rushes at Yudhiṣṭhira sword raised prepared to kill him. Matilal discusses this case in several contexts[34] to make the point that Kṛṣṇa helps Arjuna resolve a "genuine moral dilemma" (Matilal 2002, 33). Kṛṣṇa says his own view is that "not to slay living creatures trumps everything," even truth (*Mbh* 8.49.20), and asks Arjuna, "How, like just another uncultivated man, could you wish to kill your elder brother, a king who knows *dharma*?" (21). He says Arjuna's vow is childish, that he has failed to take *dharma*'s subtlety into account (23–24). Granted that "there is nothing higher than truth," it can be difficult to know it, and there are circumstances where truth is falsehood and vice versa (27–29). To illustrate this, he tells Arjuna two stories, catching his attention in the crosshairs between them to say that keeping to the truth of a vow can be a foolish consistency.

First, a hunter named Balāka, "always devoted to his *svadharma*,[35] truthful, and never harboring envy" (35cd), used to hunt to take care of his son, wife,

32. As we shall see in chapter 12 § D, Śiva and Umā also turn to each other as authorities on *dharma* in *Mbh* 13.

33. That Vedāntic schools make it one of their three authoritative texts that call for commentary is a later matter.

34. See Matilal 2002, 9–11 (detailing a nineteenth-century argument over it by Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore), 26–32 (the main discussion, which can also be found in Matilal 1989, 9–16), 47 (on the "situationality" of Kṛṣṇa's *dharma*), and 193–94 (differentiating moral and religious truths). The groundbreaking earlier study of ethical problems in the *Mahābhārata* is Strauss 1912.

35. On *svadharma*, see chapters 10 § C and 11 § B. Balāka was probably a Śūdra like the pious hunter in *Mbh* 3.196–206: an authority on *svadharma* who gets to instruct another (?) Kauśika who, as Smets notes (2005, 521), was "befouled" by a she-crane (*balākā*)! Smets decides they are probably different Kauśikas because their learning differs: Kṛṣṇa's example is "not much learned" (*na bahuśruta*; *Mbh* 8.98.49.41b), while the other is explicitly a Veda-reciter (*vedādhyāyī*; 3.197.1b) (2005, 521–22, 526–30). But this small difference could be contextual. Kauśika does not lack learning in Bhīṣma's brief description of him (12.110.8), and could be Kṛṣṇa's way of reminding Arjuna that he (Arjuna) is not as learned as Yudhiṣṭhira. It may be pertinent that Kauśikas are Viśvāmitra Brahmins since Viśvāmitra starts out a Kṣatriya and has sons of questionable learning (thanks to T. P. Mahadevan on this point).

blind parents, and others dependent on him. One day, through a shot enabled by his ability to detect an animal by the noise it made drinking water, he committed the "very cruel" (*sudāruṇa*) act of killing a beast such as he had never seen before called Andha (the "Blind" one). Yet Balāka went to heaven: Andha had gotten a boon from Brahmā enabling him to annihilate all creatures, and although Brahmā had blinded Andha, Andha was "resolved" to actualize the full potential of his boon (31, 33–40). Second, a Brahmin named Kauśika "had taken a vow of telling the truth *always*. A group of gangsters, in hot pursuit of some innocent men, came to ask him which way they had fled. . . . He told the truth, and the men were chased and killed," and Kauśika went to a horrible hell.[36] As Matilal puts it, Balāka's story sounds like a "case of moral [we might say blind or dumb] luck. The goodness of a human life is not always dependent on the things that the moral agent can control. . . . By contrast, Kauśika had a project for life. . . . But according to Kṛṣṇa's ethical system, he acted stupidly, and chose the alternative that ruined his dream entirely" (2002, 29). Left, after hearing these two stories, to think it through whether Yudhiṣṭhira should still be killed (*Mbh* 8.49.56), Arjuna is remorseful and thankful for being rescued from disaster. But he still needs Kṛṣṇa's help in working out a solution, since his vow must count for something. Always on top of things, Kṛṣṇa arranges for Arjuna to "kill" Yudhiṣṭhira by addressing his elder brother (*guru*) in the familiar, and to atone by "killing" himself with self-praise.[37]

Matilal calls "genuine" dilemmas like this "action-guide dilemmas," "which are not simply products of confusion, and for which, to be sure, there are no clear-cut solutions." They arise when "an agent cannot do everything that is obligatory for him to do in that situation. He feels obliged to do, say, both *X* and *Y*; but it is impossible to do both of them. For the situation is such that doing *X* would be undoing *Y*, and vice versa" (Matilal 2002, 6; cf. 23). On the present example, Matilal makes a number of rewarding points: that Kṛṣṇa's intervention "acknowledges progressive revision" (27),[38] demands an "ordering of priorities" (30), offers reparation for a promise not kept and the remorse for not keeping it, and salvages what is recoverable from a conflict (32–33). But the passage holds two more surprises that fit Matilal's profile of the Archangel: what it says about poets and about reason.

36. *Mbh* 8.49.41–47b, for brevity's sake and because "gangsters" is nice for "cruel *dasyus*" (43c), quoting Matilal 2002, 9.

37. See also Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 206–7, 269–70; 1984, 24; Reich 1998, 231–45; Biardeau 2002, 2: 348–52, 356–58.

38. Cf. Ganeri 2005, 201, concluding, after discussing Kṛṣṇa's and others' roles in the killing of Droṇa, that, "In the *Mahābhārata* we see directly a dynamic moral tradition employing its immersed critical principles in a process of genuine development."

First, about poets, the passage itself has not forgotten them. Arjuna could make such a blunder, says Kṛṣṇa, only because he is unacquainted with the settled opinion (*niścayam*) of those who have pursued *dharma*, the poets (*kavayaḥ*; 8.49.16)! Nor has Matilal forgotten them in what he says about "two different types of moral persons as paradigmatic" in their treatment of dilemmas:

> One is the dutiful fulfiller of moral obligations *á la Kant*. In India we have Rāma whose moral ideas would fall into this category. The nature of *dharma* idealized by Rāma (or Yudhiṣṭhira) seems to have been very rigid. It seldom bends. The other paradigmatic person we meet in the moral field can be described as the imaginative poet. He becomes a perspectivist and understands the contingency of the human situation. He realizes the necessity for "paradigm shifts" much like the revolutionary scientists in Thomas Kuhn's description of the nature of scientific revolutions. He looks at the particular situation but also beyond it. He is our Kṛṣṇa. (Matilal 2002, 34)

I believe Matilal's contrast holds in what it says about Rāma and about linking Kṛṣṇa with the imaginative poets, for as we shall have numerous occasions to see, Kṛṣṇa and Vyāsa are Archangelic together. Indeed, we can say there is no moral distance or tension whatsoever between Kṛṣṇa and Vyāsa such as there is between Rāma and the *Rāmāyaṇa* poet Vālmīki. But I believe the parenthesis on Yudhiṣṭhira is a monkey wrench.[39] Rāma gets to fulfill his moral obligations in the ideal poetic universe crafted for him by Vālmīki to sustain the very image of Rāma's perfection, yet also, I urge, to hold it up to question. Yudhiṣṭhira, on the other hand, must seek to work his way along in a darker world where his action guides come with intermittent interventions by a variety of Archangelic agents, including not only Kṛṣṇa and the poet-author (and indeed, more often than not, the latter) but his father Dharma, other gods and Ṛṣis, and his other "grandfather" Bhiṣma. As we will see in chapter 9, Yudhiṣṭhira must weigh what both Kṛṣṇa and Vyāsa have to say in facing his dilemma over truth and noncruelty in the slaying of Droṇa.

Second, about reason, here is what Kṛṣṇa says Arjuna should draw from the two stories he has told him:

> There will be some indication for you. (Sometimes) supreme knowledge is difficult to specify. In such cases one resolves (matters)

39. Cf. Ganeri 2005, 192, like Matilal viewing Yudhiṣṭhira as "the inflexible rule follower," and reading this dubious understanding into Yudhiṣṭhira's stance in the killing of Droṇa (see further 2007).

> by reasoning (*duṣkaram paramajñānaṃ tarkeṇātra vyavasyati*). Surely many people say, "*Śruti* is *dharma*." I have no trouble with that, but not everything is enjoined. Promulgation of *dharma* is done for the sake of the flourishing (*prabhava*) of beings. (8.49.47c–49)[40]

Where Kṛṣṇa says "not everything is enjoined (*na hi sarvaṃ vidhīyate*)," we can take him to be saying "not everything has a rule (*vidhi*)." That is, Kṛṣṇa uses the verbal root *vi-√dhā*, from which comes the noun *vidhi*, whose main early meaning is "rule," "injunction." As early as chapter 3, we shall begin to note this verb and its derivatives, and the associations they often have with the root *√dhṛ* and its derivatives, including *dhárman, dharma*, etc. What Kṛṣṇa means is that where there is no rule, such cases call for reason if *dharma* is to flourish.

As far as I can see, leaving out an interpolation cited in chapter 9 § D where Yudhiṣṭhira is answering "The Yakṣa's Questions," no one else speaks about reason (*tarka*) in the Sanskrit epics except for the aged Bhīṣma, who, in most cases, says *tarka* is to be shunned as a useless science (*vidyām . . . nirārthikām*; 12.173.45cd, 13.37.12ef) associated with critical and technical "philosophical" terms like *ānvīkṣiki*, "investigative science" (12.173.45c; 13.37.12c); *hetuvāda*, "causal argumentation" (12.173.46a, 13.37.13ab); *nāstikya*, "heresy" (12.173.47a); and *tarkaśāstra*, "treatises on reason" (12.238.17cd, 12.261.39–40).[41] But when Bhīṣma mentions *tarka* in rehashing the same two stories (at 12.110.4–15; see Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 760), he is, like Kṛṣṇa, talking about moral rather than philosophical reasoning.[42] Kṛṣṇa's moral reasoning is often challenged, but in Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata* he usually gets the benefit of the doubt.[43] And this is so not only where it concerns conflict between individuals but where it concerns the welfare of the worlds. Even if Kṛṣṇa advises one "crooked means" (*jihmopāya*) after another to keep a bad situation from getting worse, and even if "all that Kṛṣṇa was able to do was to salvage justice at the end of the battle" (Matilal 2002, 105)—and of course even that is questionable—he and the poet can be said to have moved things along.

40. *Mbh* 8.49.48–49 has much in common with 12.110.9–10b. The last lines of these segments about "reason" (*tarka*) are identical. Line 8.49.48ab has an alternate initial *pāda* in the Southern Recension, *duṣkaraṃ pratisaṃkhyānam*, which seems to be a partial backreading from 12.110.9cd where Bhīṣma's shorter account begins the line similarly with the same ending. Cf. P. L. Vaidya's paraphrase translation and rephrasing of these verses' import in his notes to the Pune Critical Edition (1954, 690).

41. See Halbfass 1988, 273–86, notably 278–79 on *Mbh* usages, and *Rām* 2.94.32–33: advice of Rāma in the same vein.

42. There can, of course, also be dubious moral reasoning, as when Upayāja, a priest, tells King Drupada that while he won't perform a homicidal sacrifice for Drupada to kill Droṇa; his unscrupulous and venal older brother Yāja will agree to do it using the "eye of reason" (*tarkacakṣuṣā*; 1.155.19b)—background to the sacrifice that produces Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Draupadī.

43. Duryodhana being an exception worth mentioning.

Matilal thus develops distinctions that are worth pursuing. To Yudhiṣṭhira's benefit and in his hearing, Kṛṣṇa can get Arjuna to appreciate that there is not a rule for everything. On the other hand, in aspiring to rational consistency in applying *dharma* as rules to situations that may seem incompatible, but for which there must be no dilemma in reality, Rāma is more like *Manu,* which, as Donald Davis has argued (2007*b*), probably introduces its fourth source of *dharma, ātmatuṣṭi*, to resolve situations that the other three sources do not clarify (see chapter 5). Yudhiṣṭhira must make something out of living in Vyāsa and Kṛṣṇa's world that Rāma cannot make out of living in Vālmīki's. Or, more precisely, where Vālmīki leaves us only to imagine what Rāma might actually make, once he hears it, out of the poetic universe created for him, we can see Yudhiṣṭhira interacting with both the poet and Kṛṣṇa. Here are three byplays between Yudhiṣṭhira and Kṛṣṇa that show Yudhiṣṭhira's attunement and participation in a paradigm shift he thinks he can believe in. The first occurs just before the war begins, the second in its middle, and the third as it is about to end.

First, there are two "abstract deities," the Placer (Dhātṛ) and the Ordainer (Vidhātṛ), whom we will be tracking through several chapters, whose names are derived from the verbal roots √*dhā* and *vi-*√*dhā*, respectively, the latter verb having been just mentioned. As we shall see by chapter 10, there are some contexts in which these appellations may refer implicitly, without naming him directly, to Kṛṣṇa. Yudhiṣṭhira, however, is the first person in the main narrative to give Kṛṣṇa these names directly, calling him *both* Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ,[44] and in a decisive context—that of determining who should marshal the Pāṇḍava armies in the imminent war. After hearing several names proposed by his brothers, Yudhiṣṭhira says,

> When it comes to this whole universe, lads, Keśava, the self of *dharma* (*dharmātmā*), knows all: the relative substance, relative strength, what has occurred and what is to be sought. Let him be the marshal of our armies whom Kṛṣṇa Dāśārha[45] calls, whether he is skilled in weapons or not, or if he is old or young. He is our root in triumph (*vijaye mūlam*), lads, as well as in reversal (*viparyaye*).

44. Kṛṣṇa says he is Dhātṛ in the *BhG*. Cf. 12.60.6, where, after Kṛṣṇa gives Bhīṣma the "divine eye" with which to see everything pertaining to *dharma* and *artha* with a constantly lucid mind (*sattvasthaṃ ca mano nityam*) (12.52.15–21), Bhīṣma begins his postwar sermon to Yudhiṣṭhira bowing to "Kṛṣṇa who ordains (*namaḥ kṛṣṇāya vedhase*)." *Vedhas* (probably from *vi-*√*dhā*) is another word for "Ordainer" that is probably cognate with Dhātṛ and especially Vidhātṛ: "an arranger, disposer, creator (esp. applied to Brahmā, but also to Prajāpati, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Dharma, the Sun, & co.), Mbh" (MW [1899] 1964, 1018); as a Ṛgvedic usage, also "an august ritual title" (Jamison 1996, 80). See Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 147–48 and n. 256; 312, 315, proposing that the *Rājadharma* could originally have begun here, though, as he admits, it must be read as a resumption.

45. The name means "worthy of respect" (Biardeau 2002, I: 105 n. 23).

> On him rest our lives, kingship, being and nonbeing, happiness and misery. He is the Placer and Ordainer, and success is founded there (*eṣa dhātā vidhātā ca siddhir atra pratiṣṭhitā*). He whom Kṛṣṇa Dāśārha calls fit shall be the marshal of our armies. Let the best of speakers speak—the night is running out. (5.149.33–36)

Getting nothing specific in reply from Kṛṣṇa, Yudhiṣṭhira soon takes the initiative himself and appoints Draupadī's twin brother Dhṛṣṭadyumna, "who had been born from the fire to be the death of Droṇa" (154.12cd). I give the flat translation of *dharmātmā* as "self of *dharma*" to keep the focus on what interests Yudhiṣṭhira, who has earlier recognized Kṛṣṇa as "lord of *dharma*" (*dharmeśvara*) and master of policy (5.28.9; cf. 2.14.9; 18.3). Yudhiṣṭhira makes a correlation between *dharma* and Kṛṣṇa's knowing ability to "set in place" and "ordain" what will bring success in war. But Kṛṣṇa typically leaves the matter to Yudhiṣṭhira to decide on his own.

Second, upon the fall of Bhīṣma, Kṛṣṇa congratulates Yudhiṣṭhira, saying he must have won "by good luck" (*diṣṭyā*), or perhaps by destiny (*daivataiḥ*), or perhaps "having gotten you who can kill with a look (as his foe) he was burnt by your wrathful eye" (6.115.61–62).

> Thus addressed, Dharmarāja answered Janārdana, "Victory is by your grace, defeat by your wrath. You are surely our refuge, Kṛṣṇa, who brings fearlessness to *bhaktas*. Unmarvellous is victory (*anāścaryo jayas*) for those whom you, Keśava, always protect in battle and are always also engaged in their welfare. Having betaken ourselves to you in every way, there is no marvel (*āścaryam*). That is my opinion."
> Thus addressed, Janārdana answered, smiling: "Only in you is this word fit,[46] best of kings." (63–65)

Kṛṣṇa appreciates that, more often than anyone else, Yudhiṣṭhira will see his marvels as unmarvellous. In this, as we shall see in chapters 12 and 13, Yudhiṣṭhira as a *bhakta* knows enough to "see things as they are" in the fashion of certain Ṛṣis.

Third, upon the fall of the Kaurava king Duryodhana, Yudhiṣṭhira shows that he can explain himself to Kṛṣṇa in Kṛṣṇa's own terms. Bhīma, the second oldest Pāṇḍava born between Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna, has downed Duryodhana by foul means—a "below-the-belt" thigh-smashing strike with his mace or club that Kṛṣṇa signalled to him to do, through Arjuna. But Bhīma goes further and crushes Duryodhana's head with his left foot (9.58.12). This outrages Kṛṣṇa's

46. *Yuktarūpam*; proper, suitably formed.

brother Baladeva, who had trained both combatants. But Baladeva protests only the low blow. Kṛṣṇa makes his own excuses for this foul play that do not convince Baladeva, who leaves the scene in outrage. Nor do they convince the bard Saṃjaya, who is recounting the story. Saṃjaya calls Kṛṣṇa's justification a "fraudulent transgression of *dharma* (*dharmacchalam*)" (9.59.22a). The bard's comments would seem to set up Kṛṣṇa's next words, which are to ask Yudhiṣṭhira how he can excuse Bhīma's further transgression of trampling his victim's head:

> Kṛṣṇa said, "To what end, Dharmarāja, do you sanction *adharma* when the head of the insensible and fallen Duryodhana, whose kinsmen are slain, is crushed by Bhīma with his foot? Conversant with *dharma*, why do you look on with indifference (*upaprekṣasi*), king?" Yudhiṣṭhira said, "It does not please me, Kṛṣṇa, that Wolfbelly touched a king on the head with his foot out of wrath, and I do not delight in this destruction of the family. By guile were we always deceived by the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who spoke many cruel words. Indeed, we were exiled to the forest. That grief of Bhīmasena turns exceedingly in his heart. Reflecting so, Vārṣṇeya, I overlook it. Therefore, having slain that one bereft of wisdom, covetous, under the sway of desire (*kāmavaśānugam*), let the Pāṇḍava gratify his desire (*kāma*), be it *dharma* or *adharma*!" After Dharmarāja had spoken, Vāsudeva, that perpetuator of the Yadu family, said with difficulty (*kṛcchrād*), "At any rate (or, as desired), let it be so (*kāmam astvevam iti*)!" (9.59.29–35)

As we will see, moral choices can be difficult even for Kṛṣṇa. But once again, the important point is that they can move on. As Kṛṣṇa knows, Yudhiṣṭhira had decried the crushing of Duryodhana's head in no uncertain terms. The exchange changes the mood from gloom at Baladeva's departure to Bhīma's wide-eyed joy at being let off the hook (38). And the *adhyāya* or "chapter" ends with Yudhiṣṭhira extolling the "good luck" of having had Kṛṣṇa's counsel with which to conquer the earth (83–84).

One would not hear such a relaxation of *dharma* from Rāma, and indeed, there was no one in the *Rāmāyaṇa* like Kṛṣṇa to ask him for one, or to confirm it. To my mind, these considerations put Yudhiṣṭhira in both camps. Like Rāma, he is "like one of those philosophers who admit the facticity of moral dilemmas and insist that our commitment to consistency would require us to modify the system by reordering priorities or by discarding certain principles" (Matilal 2002, 27). Indeed, Matilal is citing the philosopher R. M. Hare's modification (1986) of the moral precept "do not lie" into "do not lie except to the

enemy in time of war," which is precisely what Kṛṣṇa will advise Yudhiṣṭhira to do between the fellings of Bhīṣma and Duryodhana to bring about the death of Droṇa "by not very glorious means" (Matilal 2002, 66; cf. 46, 87–88, 95–99). But Yudhiṣṭhira is also party to Hare's "higher type of critical thinking," which, in Matilal's terms, still drawing on Hare, would be the side of the intervening "Archangel" (2002, 26). Indeed, as we will see in chapter 9, when Yudhiṣṭhira lies to Droṇa at Kṛṣṇa's prompting, he bends at a point where Rāma's doing so would be more or less inconceivable. Both types of moral reasoning can accommodate *dharma* to *bhakti* and vice versa: in Rāma's case, as a figure of perfection worthy not only of the highest "loyalty" but, for those who sense his divinity, "devotion"; in Yudhiṣṭhira's, as one who senses his own good fortune in having Kṛṣṇa among those who keep appearing to help him see *dharma* with a fresh twist.

D. Chapter by Chapter

Matilal's notion of a paradigm shift around Kṛṣṇa is, then, one of the ways we can begin to think about the *Mahābhārata* as introducing change over time with regard to *dharma*. As I have mentioned, it is consonant with another: Biardeau's idea of "a *bhakti* swerve." From chapters 5 through 12, we shall be opening up these and other ways through which to appreciate that projecting change in *dharma* over time is a large and complex initiative of the *Mahābhārata*, and also part of a larger intertextual project that includes initiatives by other texts, but also, I will argue, involves the *Mahābhārata*'s response to some of them, and these other texts' responses to the *Mahābhārata*—including, moving on to chapter 13, the response by the Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa in his *Buddhacarita*.

If, however, the *Mahābhārata* will be the pivotal text spread over the center of this book, the Aśokan edicts are pivotal for it in another sense by marking the historical watershed at which the book begins in chapter 2. We start our discussion of *dharma* texts over time by observing that—whatever may have preceded them in Brahmanical and Buddhist circles—an intertextal history of Buddhist and Brahmanical *dharma* texts in their classical period must effectively begin with the Aśokan edicts and what they record of the *dhaṃma* campaign that King Aśoka sought to implement through them.[47] Yet even as we let the edicts serve primarily as an historical watershed, they alert us to

47. I thank Dan Rudmann, who, in reading an early draft of Hiltebeitel 2010*c* as an MA candidate after auditing the first Freshman Seminar I gave on "Dharma in Buddhism and Hinduism" in 2006, had the idea, which I adopted, of treating Aśoka as a watershed figure.

some of the ways other texts will thematize change in *dharma* over time: dystopias and utopias; the role of the king; *dharma* over dynastic time; *dharma* over cosmic time; *dharma* and meditation; *dharma* and the biographical; indeed, quite uniquely, the autobiographical.

Chapters 3 and 4 then take us to the far side of the Aśokan watershed: to the Brahmanical understandings of *dharma* that preceded it, in chapter 3; and to the Buddhist understandings of *dhamma* and/or *dharma* that likely preceded, accompanied, and followed up on it in chapter 4. In chapter 3, we pursue the implications of *dharma*, in the form *dhárman*, having begun in the *Ṛgveda* as a *new* concept; the use of this concept to generate novel enigmas from the earliest to the latest texts in the Vedic canon; its centrality to changing notions of kingship in those texts; and, no less important, to changing notions of the Brahmin. And in chapter 4, we take up Buddhist understandings of *dharma* as they were developed in (or better, into) the three baskets of the early Buddhist canon, taking their extant collections to have some historical implications themselves for understanding how Buddhists formulated the Buddha's teachings over time. Here, of course, our watershed metaphor will no longer be serving us so well. Rather than a feature of the South Asian landscape from which water flows in two separate directions, let us convert the Aśokan watershed into one of those South Asian imperial projects, an anicut or great dam, toward which numerous Vedic and Buddhist tributaries must have flowed, gotten dammed up for a while and forced to intermingle, and from which they then overflowed, each with new vigor, as the two communities took the potent waters into new flows and channels of their own further devising.

Gathering force within this current, we then meet in chapter 5 what will be called a vast Brahmanical society in mutation, codifying and debating its customs and traditions; providing an all-encompassing cosmological setting for treating "caste and life-stage" in the context of past, present, and future; giving explanatory power to *dharma* over time in relation to the post-cosmogonic mixing of peoples, including Greeks, that follows from creation of the original four castes; and integrating such subject matter into new poetic genres that we call epic and *dharmaśāstra*, which in the case of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* or *Laws of Manu* include some advice about how a king should start up a new kingdom and should lead his royal day.

That brings us to what I have called the thematic pivot of this book in chapters 6 and 7, which take up the theme of *dharma* over time directly, and also, in both chapters, comparatively on usages where Buddhist and Brahmanical texts worked these matters out in significantly different ways. Chapter 6 will be about how they depicted *dharma* in relation to the big cosmological time units, beginning with the *kalpa*—in this case, probably in full

awareness of what each other were doing. Chapter 7 will then be about what I have called two minor *dharma* texts, ones that were probably known only within the two respective traditions, each of which, impacted by much the same geography and history, prophesied the end result of *dharma*'s change over time in a future disaster. These two chapters open new windows on the two epics, and especially on the *Mahābhārata*, which remain under discussion through all remaining chapters.

Chapter 8 will then launch a four-chapter exploration of the epics by exploring the topic of *dharma* over time through the three generations of dynastic instability that precede the main generation in the *Mahābhārata*. Set loosely in the armature of a twilight between ages or *yugas*, this three-generational buildup makes women's *dharma* central to an exploration of the nuances of intersecting dimensions of time (authorial time, intimations of an overarching divine plan, maternal time, spousal time, generational time, historical time, time and rivers, time running out) in which dharmic norms come under repeated challenge and scrutiny.

Chapter 9 will then look at the question of moral biography in the king's *dharma* as both epics portray their central royal personages of Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira: how each epic constructs it differently with regard to instruction in dharmic precedent, questioning and ambiguity versus moral certainty, and personal accountability. Building on hints at biography noticed in the Aśokan edicts (chapter 2) and in portrayals of the Buddha (chapter 4), and also in *Manu*'s outline for how a king should lead his day (chapter 5), this chapter anticipates the critical treatment of the epics in Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* (chapter 13) and also builds on the treatment of women's *dharma* in chapter 8, to anticipate further discussion in chapter 10 of such topics as the question of whether the epics also portray women's *dharma* biographically, and the epics' divine plans in chapters 10 through 12.

With chapter 10, we come back to women's time: now depicted not so much through the weave and flow of maternal generations but with respect to its experience by each epic's chief heroine. We find that while biographical time is left more as the province of their royal husbands, the time of the heroine queen is episodic. It revolves initially around brief and indirect glimpses of her passions and wit with respect to scenes of birth, youth, and marriage, and then zeroes in on her handling of each epic's central time of crisis, which involves specifically *her* violation in a way that affected no woman in the generations before her. Focusing on Draupadī and Sītā as "legal wives" brings into relief what each makes of her worst situation, where a woman's *dharma* implies playing for time, biding time while waiting for a husband to get his act together, and dark thoughts on the fruition of karma. In Sītā's case, this

includes meditations on the relief she might find in death; in Draupadī's, it brings out her flashes of anger and impatience. In both cases, the heroine intimates a perception of being the pawn and victim of a divine plan beyond her own devising.

Chapter 11 on *dharma* in the *Bhagavad Gītā* then explores how this text, which from so many angles may be considered to lie at the center of the *Mahābhārata*, puts *dharma* at the center of a vast vision of the workings of time itself. What, taking an implausible time out in the middle of the battlefield just before the outbreak of war, did God say to the world's greatest warrior, who, for a moment, thought better of being a killer? We approach the *Gītā* through what the larger epic shows are its ripple effects in the way the relation between *dharma* and time is depicted inward and outward from the *Gītā* itself. In the *Gītā*'s own time, we have a text that takes us from Kṛṣṇa's revelations about Time, *kalpas*, *yugas*, and the divine plan to his instructions on living *dharma* over ordinary time experientially, allowing that Arjuna will need time to digest what he has to say about fulfilling one's *dharma* in a supremely difficult time in a way that allows one to transcend it.

Chapter 12 then takes us into an attempt to "map" *dharma* in relation to *bhakti*, proposing that such a map must begin with the divine plan (or plans) one has been hearing about. It becomes a project of mapping the *Mahābhārata* in relation to three other texts—not only the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Manu* but also the *Harivaṃśa*—as something that relates *dharma* perhaps first and foremost to time, and, with it, to notions of *yugadharma* and *avataraṇa*. These complex concepts take in different prophesies about the Kali *yuga* and themes of divine "descent," including the "*avatāras*" of Viṣṇu, among whom Kalki can end the Kali *yuga*, and descents of the goddess Gaṅgā. With Gaṅgā, it also takes in dynastic descent through generations into a carefully targeted dharmic geography. By attending further to how *dharma* and *bhakti* interrelate in the lives of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa on this very terrain, we map *dharma* and *bhakti* through the lifelong interpersonal themes of friendship, hospitality, and ultimate separation.

Finally, chapter 13 on Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* brings us back to the question of *dharma* in biography. Not only does Aśvaghoṣa construct a biography of the Buddha from earlier Buddhist sources, he does so taking full cognizance of the question of precedent raised in the Sanskrit epics. But he is also concerned to show the uniqueness of the Buddhist *dharma* and of the Buddha's discovery of it. In the context where a Buddha's greatness lies in rediscovering the *dharma* entirely on his own, Aśvaghoṣa portrays how Prince Siddhārtha experiences the "three signs" of old age, illness, and death, each "for the first time," as raising for him the question of an underlying "law" or *dharma*. Where a Buddha is concerned,

epic precedent on *dharma*, subtle, complex, and fascinating as it may be, has no authority. Aśvaghoṣa undercuts that authority with his marked emphasis that a younger person in a lineage can outdo an older epigone in achievement. Most central is the repeated insistence that "there is no wrong time for *dharma*," which provides opportunities for Prince Siddhārtha to trump Brahmanical concerns for the inherent timeliness of *āśramadharma* as staggered across a lifetime. Aśvaghoṣa's text affords an overview that takes us back to the earlier Buddhist canon, to Aśoka via a closing tribute, and into the more recent times of the most high-impact classical Brahmanical *dharma* texts—the two epics and *Manu*—all three of which Aśvaghoṣa seems to know, and in the case of the epics, definitely savors as poems worthy of engaging for his Buddhist critique.

2

Aśoka Maurya

To begin with Aśoka Maurya is to begin what might be called the watershed figure in the history of *dharma*, and also with a distinctive set of texts, his rock and pillar edicts, that allow us to begin with what we might call texts on the ground before we move on to works of literature. In his "brief edicts," Aśoka uses the term *dhaṃma* "about 111 times," a number that "stands in sharp contrast" to what one finds "in the much more vast literature of the middle and late vedic periods" that precede him (Olivelle 2004*a*, 505).

It is not likely that many could have read the Aśokan inscriptions even in Aśoka's own time, since they are among the first-known Indic texts to use alphabetic writing.[1] Moreover, it seems that as other scripts came into use, Aśoka's Brāhmī inscriptions were readable for only a few centuries. By the time Sumudragupta (ruling from ca. 335–376 CE) had extended the early Gupta empire, his postmortem eulogist seems to have associated the Aśokan pillar at Allahabad (perhaps originally at Kausambi) with imperial sway by having it co-inscribed in Sanskrit with a triumphalist message much opposite the earlier one engraved on it by Aśoka. This eulogy (*praśāsti*) describes Samudragupta's march of conquest over kings and chieftains across most of north India and down deep into the south, to Kanchipuram, even though the Guptas probably never had direct rule of much more than the northern Ganges plain (see Bloch 1950, 26–27; Thapar 2002, 283–84). The eulogist would probably not have been able to actually read the Prākrit of Aśoka's inscription or its Mauryan Brāhmī script. If the Chinese

1. Nikam and McKeon 1978, 16, say that they were "probably intelligible to the common people throughout the empire"—though perhaps not directly in writing.

Buddhist pilgrims to India, Fa-hsien (399–414) and Hsüan-tsang (629–45), give a near-contemporary indication, he would, like them, have probably had access only to oral pseudo-translations that had no correspondence with what the Prākrit actually said. The Chinese pilgrims describe "readings" derived from legends about Aśoka recounted in Buddhist Sanskrit texts like the *Aśokāvadāna*, which describes Aśoka's imperial conquests in a fashion similar to those now recalled of Samudragupta. By the fourteenth century it was forgotten that the pillars themselves had anything to do with Aśoka. It was not until soon after the Brāhmī script was deciphered in 1837 by James Prinsep that the inscriptions could again be read and Aśoka's *dhaṃma* experiment be studied (see Strong 1983, 5–15). Yet it remained conjectural until 1923, when the Maski inscription was found mentioning his name as "Asoka," that the edicts were indeed his (Bloch 1950, 17–18, 145).

A. Aśoka's Inscriptions

Aśoka was not just a king but an emperor, and his edicts, which he sometimes called *dhaṃmalipi* ("*dhaṃma* texts" or "edicts on *dhaṃma*"),[2] were means to broadcast an imperial program. He uses the term *dhaṃma* with some specific connotations. It is likely that Aśoka was aware that the term carried older Brahmanical implications of royal authority (see chapter 3). Yet he is perfectly clear in some inscriptions that he associates it with Buddhism in its sense of referring to the Buddha's teachings, which had made him a convert. Even where the edicts do not refer to Buddhism, it is impossible to overlook the term's Buddhist resonances in the name of some secular or Brahmanical reading.[3] We also get some hint of the range of meanings that Aśoka imputed to *dhaṃma* from a trilingual rock inscription (Kandahar 1), where the Prākrit *dhaṃma* is given Greek and Aramaic counterparts: *eusebia*, "piety, respect for

2. In providing translations from the edicts, I consult mainly Bloch 1950, who, for this compound, gives "text de la Loi" (90, etc.) and Nikam and McKeon 1978, who give "edict on Dharma" (57, etc.). Bloch notes that "*lipi* designates the inscription in its materiality: the edict itself would be *śāsana*, 'proclamation' " (my translation), and says *lipi* is an Indian adaptation, from the root *lip*, "to smear," and perhaps *likh*, "to write," of Iranian *dipi*, which is conserved in edicts from the northwest (90 n. 2). I cite Nikam and McKeon for its accessibility, but with the caution that they tend to Sanskritize—as can be seen from the form *dharma* and in many of their locutions and paraphrases. For instance, "to work for the promotion and to prevent the decline of Dharma" (Nikam and McKeon 1978, 32) can even be said to Hinduize what Bloch translates more literally as "pour qu'un s'attache au progrès sur ce point et qu'on n'admette aucune défaillance" (Bloch 1950, 101). I soon discuss this passage from RE 4, and will return to it in chapter 6.

3. I part company from the secularizing slant of Bowles 2007, 130 ("a 'secular' reflection of the many movements which had arisen in the previous couple of centuries"), and to some extent from Thapar 1997, 309 ("His ideas on dhamma borrow from the current debate"). On Brahmanical readings, see, for example, n. 2.

gods, kings, and parents," and *qsyt*, "truth," respectively[4] (see Olivelle 2004*a*, 509 n. 26; Falk 2006*a*, 242–43). Yet these translations are probably most interesting as attempts to find terms that would resonate with speakers of these languages in the Kandahar area (in today's Afghanistan), where these languages were in use, and probably cannot be taken to supply the deepest colorings that *dhaṃma* would have had for Aśoka in Prākrit.

The inscriptions are written mainly in two scripts: Brāhmī over most of his Indian empire; and, in the northwest, Kharoṣṭhī. According to Nikam and McKeon (1978, 15–16), they convey a "crude" Prākrit that was perhaps close to Aśoka's own words. In any case, in rock edict (RE) 8, Aśoka says that, as of his tenth year, he himself now goes on *dhaṃma*-tours (*dhaṃmayāttā*), giving audience in the provinces (*janapadas*), preaching on *dhaṃma* and discussing questions on *dhaṃma* (*dhaṃmaparipucchā*), and that the pleasure he derives from this is "a second revenue"(Bloch 1950, 112–13). Aśoka begins several of the rock edicts (RE 5, 6, 9, 11) and all of the pillar edicts (PE) with a kind of oral formula: "King Priyadassi, beloved of the gods, speaks thus (*evaṃ āha*)."[5] But then he often ends on the note that the inscription is written (*likhitā*), in some cases declaring his intention that it will last a long time (RE 5, PE 7). Clearly Aśoka felt it was important to set what he had to say about *dhaṃma* in stone. But we also can detect a hope that his reign would be credited with implementing change in *dhaṃma* over time.

Aśoka's program in edicts can be traced through his reign.[6] They have not only served scholars to compose a biography for Aśoka; they can be read as autobiography.[7] Such matters are nowhere more revealing than in the first edict he promulgated. Minor Rock Edict 1 (MRE 1) was composed in Aśoka's "10th regnal year and inscribed from then onwards" (Falk 2006*b*, 55; cf. Anderson 1990). Thanks to the vivid visual documentation and compelling interpretation of Harry Falk (2006*b*),[8] we are now able to consider it in both a biographical and geographical context.

4. See Olivelle 2004*a*, 509 n. 26: "A tantalizing possibility is that Aśoka's use of *dharma* may, in fact, have been influenced by Hellenistic or Persian royal vocabularies." Cf. Thapar 1997, 281–82.

5. PE 7, a kind of summa, breaks up its long text with ten uses of this oral formula or a variant with *āha* ("he said").

6. I follow Bloch's (1950, 18–19) and Lamotte's (1988, 226–27) chronology, for which Nikam and McKeon (1978, 17–18) give dates correspondingly two years earlier.

7. Cf. Visvanathan 2010, 2: "Here, time sweeps into the records in many ways. It occurs in the references to his own religious trajectory; in the repeated usages of regnal years; in the appeals to supervisors and teachers to instruct their pupils in accordance with the old ways (*porānāpakiti*). . . ."

8. Cakrabarti 2011 demurs at "Falk's idea that the *Samajas* of the Asokan time provided occasions for 'orgies'" (2). He prefers to find "geopolitical aspects of the locations" (10), mainly route alignments, which can be uncertain (17, 30). He also questions differentiating MRE 1 from MRE 2 in southern edicts (35), but Falk looks solid on this.

At most of MRE 1's sixteen known locations it was inscribed in caves or on hilltops or at other places "generally far removed from habitation sites" but in "the core of the Mauryan realm" (Falk 2006*b*, 55). At one hilltop spot in Karnataka the inscription is atop a nearly inaccessible boulder; at another it is under a dramatically perched rock overhang (72–73; 86–87). "Some of the MRE sites on hills and mountains are so impressive by their nature or their beautiful surroundings or both that their sanctity must go back to a time much earlier than Aśoka or even the Buddha" (56). Falk even suggests, "Considering that the text provides the first historical evidence in Brāhmī characters one wonders if there is a reason for their being kept away from a possible reading public" (2006*b*, 55). Falk demonstrates that MRE 1 is "of a completely different nature" from the so-called MRE 2, which accompanies and enlarges MRE 1 at only five of its six southern locations, but not at its northern ones, and never occurs on its own. He outlines twenty rules made by MRE 2 that call on Aśoka's *dhaṃma* bureaucracy to promulgate them (2006*b*, 57). This bureaucracy is announced only in subsequent Rock Edicts (RE), guaranteeing an interim of several years between the initial promulgation of MRE 1 and the affixation of MRE 2 to it at southern sites.

As Falk presents it, MRE 1's "basic text" is as obscure as its locations:

> King Devanampiya speaks thus:
> For two and a half years I was a (Buddhist) layman and I was not very zealous. For somewhat more than a year I visited the *saṅgha* and became very zealous. The gods have formerly not mingled with men, but now they are mingled. This is the result of zeal. Now not only high persons can reach this aim, no, even common people can reach it if they are zealous. (Falk 2006*b*, 55)

Note that MRE 1's basic text does not mention *dhaṃma*.[9] As a Buddhist layman of increasing zeal, Aśoka would certainly have become familiar with the term. But he does not make it his key term until the rock edicts. Rather, if MRE 2 follows up MRE 1 by conveying some "rudiments of *dhamma*" (Thapar 1997, 273), MRE 1 is almost surreptitious in getting that point across. What can it mean that gods who "have formerly not mingled with men" now do so, and that "not only high persons can reach this aim, no, even common people can reach it if they are zealous"? He can hardly be talking about gaining access to divine realms through Buddhist meditation practices. Just two years later, in

9. There is an exception in the version of MRE 1 at Gurjarrā in Madhya Pradesh, where d*haṃma* occurs in a final sentence not found elsewhere; see Olivelle 2004*a*, 509 n. 16; Falk 2006*b*, 77.

his twelfth regnal year Aśoka will say that he promulgates *dhaṃma* by "summoning people to tableaus of celestial palaces, tableaus of elephants, balls of fire, and other divine displays" (RE 4). In both texts, Aśoka seems willing to manipulate images of divinity much as Kauṭilya advises kings to do in the *Arthaśāstra*,[10] and to have a regal view of the gullibility of his populace.

As Falk remarks, "Although the text comes in plain words it is difficult to imagine what it is all about. Reduced to its essence it seems to propose that everyone become a Buddhist layman, develop zeal and thus mingle with the gods. What sense does it make in a hidden place to read or be told how to mingle with the gods?" (2006*b*, 55). Falk argues that "some of its meaning" emerges from investigating "the places chosen for spreading this message" (2006*b*, 55).[11] The background for this is Falk's initial tour of MRE sites in Karnataka with the ethnographer Günther-Dietz Sontheimer, on which Sontheimer, four weeks before passing away, acquainted Falk "with his idea that the places . . . could have been connected with mother cults in antiquity, very much in the fashion of practices still current in this area today. . . . These two weeks with him are unforgettably on my mind. It took years before the accumulated evidence forced me to accept his interpretation of the sites" (Falk 2006*b*, 7). Of the 16 known MRE 1 sites, *melā*s or *yātrā*s occur at nine of them today, and at 3 or 4 others there is evidence of such festivals having been discontinued. Yet, "If there is truly continuity in practices and places, then these *yātrā*s were hardly of a Buddhist nature more than 2000 years ago. This . . . must mean that Aśoka had his Buddhist-minded MREs enscribed at places where they would be seen by large crowds following practices different from his own" (56). Aśoka called such assemblages *samāja*s, "and tells us in his first RE that *samāja*s are not to be praised—because animals are killed there. Such killings no doubt served the needs of a deity at the festival site, just as they

10. See Doniger 2009*a*, 202–3: Kauṭilya "advises the king to go out in public in the company of several friends dressed up as gods so that his people will see him hobnobbing with them" (13.1.3–8). Or he might "kill an enemy by arranging to have the image of a god fall on him" (12.5.1–5), or "have his agents use the blood of animals to cause a hemorrhage to flow from images of the deities in the territory of the enemy and then have other agents declare defeat in battle in consequence of the bleeding of the deity" (3.2.27–28).

11. I cannot agree with Thapar 1997, 155 where she associates this reference to gods visiting earth with Aśoka's "confidence that his *Dhamma* had achieved so much good in the country that it was just as it had been in the righteous days of the Kṛtayuga when the gods in their pleasure visited the earth and associated with the people." As we shall see in this chapter and chapter 6, Aśoka knew and used the term *kappa* (*kalpa*) but not *yuga*, which was probably introduced in the sense attributed to him only later in Brahmanical texts. Thapar also assumes, I believe equally anachronistically (see chapter 5 § E), that the Brahmanical concept of *varṇāśramadharma* would have been part of the discussion of what constitutes *dharma*" in Aśoka's time (2005*e*, 436). Bloch 1950, 146 n. 7 rejects a similarly anachronistic view attributed to Sylvain Lévi that Aśoka might simply have had the program of every Hindu king to implement *dharma* as his *svadharma*, refuting this on the basis of Aśoka's conversion (29–30). More tellingly, such a concept of *svadharma* is probably post-Aśokan (see chapters 5 § A; 10 § B) and inconsistent with Buddhism (see chapter 12).

are common today in temples of Kālī or Śiva" (Falk 2006*b*, 57). Other "*dharma* texts" from the same temporal "cluster" as Aśoka's edicts (see chapter 1 § A) are likewise disapproving of *samāja*s. The Pāli canon mentions "*samāja*s taking place near Rājagṛha" at gatherings on hilltops, and forbids monks and nuns "to visit them out of a similar disgust" (Falk 2006*b*, 56). And *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* 1.32.19–20 mentions that if a Brahmin should go to a *samāja* or "fair," he "should circumambulate it and go away" (Olivelle 2003, 73; Falk 2006*b*, 57). Mentioning further supportive evidence from the orgiastic Vedic Mahāvrata ritual and from classical Jaina texts, Falk concludes that "folk religion has a long history. Being rather shapeless with regard to doctrine it nevertheless served basic needs. In fact, it was and is so vital that it survived all Vedic and many high-caste Hindu developments with little or no change" (56). Festivals at sites of MRE 1, which also certainly would have survived Aśoka's attempted intervention, would thus have involved blood sacrifices, swinging rites for young people, orgiastic elements, and practices of trance and possession. Aśoka wanted to tone down popular festivals.

In contrast to the cryptic message and locations of MRE I, the Major Rock Edicts (RE) were located mainly "in border areas," where most of them "can be visited without long walks starting from an ancient city site." Then last, the Pillar Edicts (PE) were "chiseled on pillars mainly in UP and the adjoining Nepalese Terai," where, "in some way" they "all seem to be connected with places of the Buddhist *saṅgha* or were part of an itinerary leading to the birthplace of the Buddha himself," which "may explain why some of them are found in rather remote areas" (Falk 2006*b*, 55). In RE 13, the famous Kalinga Rock Edict, Aśoka records that in his eighth year, ca. 260 BCE, he felt remorse over the massive deaths and hardships caused by his conquest of Kalinga, and now "considers conquest by *dhaṃma* (*dhaṃma-vijaya*) the most important conquest" (Bloch 1950, 129–30). From RE 8, we learn that he became an *upāsaka* or Buddhist lay disciple, and after about a year and a half, in ca. 258, following a visit to the Saṅgha that made him more energetic in his efforts, he either set out for Bodh Gaya or "set out for enlightenment (*ayāya saṃbodhim*)," inaugurating a *dhaṃma*-tour" that took him, for 256 nights, to such places as Bodh Gaya, scene of the Buddha's enlightenment, and Lumbini, the Buddha's birthplace. The phrase *ayāya saṃbodhim* is surprising and much debated, since Aśoka is never more than a layman and a busy king to boot, and also since the term *saṃbodhi* most typically describes nothing less than the Buddha's complete enlightenment.[12] Since no other edict marks Aśoka's progress in such terms, it is uncertain how to take the Buddhist intention behind the journey.

12. On the key and often differently interpreted phrase, see Hultzsch 1969, xliii ("a visit to Saṁbodhi, i.e., Bodh-Gayā"); Thapar 1997, 37–38 (went to the Bodhi tree); Bloch 1950, 112 n. 6 (possibly implying a quest for "l'illumination parfaite—après des renaissances," implying a doctrine not taught formally until the Mahāyāna; or going on pilgrimage to the Bodhi tree, which, however, does not normally go by the name *saṃbodhi* (cf. 33). Cf. Lamotte 1988, 226; cf. Nikam and McKeon 1978, 37, 66.

Then, as Aśoka nears the midpoint of his royal career, he promulgates three rock edicts (RE 3, 4, and 5) that mark his innovations in institutionalizing a veritable *dhaṃma* bureaucracy.[13] Beginning in his twelfth year (256 BCE), RE 3 orders that provincial and state officials go about proclaiming *dhaṃma* in five-year circuits, endorsing as "good" (*sādhu*) such things as obedience to father and mother; liberality to friends, familiars, relatives, Brahmins, and Samaṇas or ascetics; abstention from killing living creatures; and the minimum in expenditures and possessions (Bloch 1950, 95–97; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 58). Coming also in his twelfth year, RE 4 is important to this book for the way Aśoka presents the changes he is seeking to implement in relation to his ideas about past and future time:

> In the past,[14] over many centuries, killing, violence done to creatures, discourtesy to relatives, and disrespect for Brahmins and Samaṇas have only increased. But now, thanks to the *dhaṃma* conduct (*dhaṃmacaraṇena*) of King Priyadassi, beloved of the gods, the sound of drums has become the call to *dhaṃma*. Thanks to king Priyadassi, beloved of the gods, summoning people to tableaus of celestial palaces, tableaus of elephants, balls of fire, and other divine displays, promulgation of *dhaṃma* has increased that which did not exist over many centuries: abstention from killing, kindness to creatures, respect to relatives, respect for Brahmins and Samaṇas, and obedience to mother, father, and elders. This *dhaṃma* conduct has increased in diverse ways, and will increase more thanks to King Priyadassi, beloved of the gods; the sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons of King Priyadassi, beloved of the gods, will make this *dhaṃma* conduct increase more until the end of the world (*āva sa(ṃ)vaṭṭakappā*).[15] Living according to *dhaṃma* and morality (*sīlam*), they will instruct on *dhaṃma*. For that is the best activity, instruction on *dhaṃma* (*dhaṃmānusāsanam*). Moreover, *dhaṃma* conduct is impossible without morality; but progress on this point, and the absence of diminution, is good. I had this inscribed so that one applies himself to progress on this point and so that one admits no diminution.[16] Twelve years after his coronation King Priyadassi, beloved of the gods, had that engraved.[17]

13. For extensive discussion, see Thapar 1997, 94–181, 199.

14. Aśoka begins RE 8 with the same phrase (in the Girnār version of this edict), and has a similar phrase near the beginning of RE 6 (Bloch 1950, 97).

15. See chapter 6 on this usage from the Girnār version of RE 4, and variants.

16. It is here that Nikam and McKeon supply the largely gratuitous translation partially cited in n. 2: "This edict has been inscribed to inspire my descendants to work for the promotion and to prevent the decline of Dharma," paraphrasing as if in echo of the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

17. Cf. Bloch 1950, 97–101; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 31–32.

Let us note that Aśoka is the first traceable king to speak of change in *dharma*, from a worsening if not virtual default of *dhaṃma* over centuries to generations of "progress."[18] He distinguishes his reign as a turning point, separating his lineage from past kings and projecting a grand future not only on a dynastic and imperial scale but a cosmic one. As Bowles says of such passages where Aśoka speaks of his heirs, "The overwhelming sense is that Aśoka was heralding, with a considered rhetoric, what he wanted others to believe was a new era" (Bowles 2004, 97; 2007, 128 modified; cf. Thapar 1997, 155). Yet those are not quite Aśoka's terms. Rather, on a point whose significance we shall explore in chapter 6, Aśoka speaks not of having launched a new era but of having changed the course of *dhaṃma* in such a way that its bettering can increase to the end of a *kappa* or *kalpa*. For this chapter, however, it is enough to note that Aśoka uses this terminology only in one other edict, in RE 5, where, one year later, in his thirteenth year, he indicates that he is a little less sanguine about his sons and grandsons contributing to such a cosmic fulfillment. Beginning on the note that good deeds are difficult and that he and his sons have done many, he says, "If my sons, grandsons, and, after those, my posterity follow my example until the end of the world (*āva saṃvaṭṭakappā*),[19] they will also do well. But he who neglects even a detail does evil, for sin (*pāpam*) is easily done." Rather than investing much more hope in his offspring, Aśoka turns immediately to announce a new title for officials who will head a new department that will take fuller charge of his experiment in social engineering.[20] These new officers, also mentioned in MRE 2 (which must thus come after this in his program), are called *dhaṃmamahāmattās*: "*dhaṃma* overseers" or "*dhaṃma* superintendents." Says Aśoka, "In the past there were no *dhaṃmamahāmattās*. I have created them. . . ." They are charged to work at instilling *dhaṃma* among all sects (*savvapāsaṃdesu*); among those Greeks, Gandhārans, and other western peoples who are devoted to *dhaṃma*; and among Brahmins. They are to bring relief to the poor and aged, and to prisoners. They are assigned everywhere in the kingdom, from the capital to provincial towns, and even "in all the harems of my brothers and sisters and other relatives." Having announced the new portfolio of these *dhaṃma* overseers, Aśoka concludes: "This *dhaṃma* text is inscribed by me to last

18. Where Aśoka mentions "progress" (*vaddhī*, *vaddhi*, *vaḍḍhī*, etc.) and "increase" (*vaḍḍhayissati* and variants) in RE 4 (Bloch 1950, 99–100), he uses terms related to Sanskrit √*vṛddh*, "to increase." Later, in the pillar edicts, we find the term *dhaṃmavaḍḍhi*, "progrès dans le Loi" (Bloch 1950, 167, 168). Cf. Nikam and McKeon 1978, xiii: "increase in morality (*Dharma-vṛddhi*)."

19. Again from the Girnār version; see chapter 6.

20. Visvanathan adds the revealing point that although Aśoka refers to sons, gransdsons, and further generations "assuming both the reckoning of descent as well as a familial entitlement to rule," and "also the rather frank assessment that the abilities of his descendants might not match up to his hopes," "there is no explicit charting of a genealogical line" (Visvanathan 2010, 3). Quite interestingly (see chapter 7), Visvanathan finds that "the genealogical moment" occurs first among the Śuṅgas (19).

a long time, and so that my children conform to it" (Bloch 1950, 101–6; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 38–39, 58–59). One may read RE 5 as a warning. Aśoka has realized that his brothers, sisters, and especially his children bear watching, and that if his descendants are to make *dhaṃma* increase to the end of the *kalpa*, it will take administrative changes.

Finally, Aśoka's seven pillar edicts all come in a late burst in his twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh regnal years, ca. 242–241. Aśoka brings an almost retrospective tinge to the inscriptions on these highly polished lofty pillars, with deepened reflections on the nature of *dhaṃma*, the control of sin and passion, regulations of feast and animal slaughter, and, especially in PE 7, a further filling out of the dossiers for the *dhaṃma* overseers and "controllers" or "provincial governors" (*lajjūkas*) involved in the widened apparatus of *dhaṃma* supervision and instruction.[21] The pillar inscriptions suggest that over the years of his reign *dhaṃma* "seems to have acquired a far more organized set of rules" (Nikam and McKeon 1978, 8–11; Thapar 1997, 173–79 quoting 173). But at the same time, with what seems to have been a similarly growing interest, Aśoka came to emphasize that *dhaṃma* is more deeply developed by meditation than by moral prescriptions.

There are certainly good reasons to emphasize Aśoka's political motivations along with his administrative shrewdness in putting a generalized *dhaṃma* to imperial work.[22] Drawing an analogy with American "rhetoric centered on 'family values,' " Olivelle says, "For Aśoka and his political operatives, *dharma* was the 'family value' cliché of the third century BCE. It was a masterly political move. . . . He claims to have instituted *dharma* within his bureaucracy, even appointing *dharma* spies against his own family" (Olivelle 2005*b*, 129). Let us keep this suggestion of *dharma* as "family values" at play: first to notice that Aśoka makes his own royal household the scene not only of *dharma* supervision, as Olivelle notes, and, at least according to the *Aśokāvadāna*, of intense family dramas (see Strong 1983), but also the irony that such an analogy might hold for those who would see Aśoka espousing a religion that advocated homelessness as a higher value than family over and above one that could espouse the householder life as its highest ideal.[23]

21. See Bloch 1950, 163, 169 and Nikam and McKeon 1978, 34, 59 translating *lajjūka*, which the latter give as "Rājūka." They were also mentioned in MRE 2. Also among those charged with inculcating *dhaṃma* were "superintendents overseeing women, farm superintendants, and other corps of officials" (RE 12: Bloch 1950, 124; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 52), and others saw to rest houses, wells, and shade trees along the roads for men and beasts (RE 2; PE 7).

22. See Thapar 1997, 309; Lamotte 1988, 228, 233–36; Nikam and McKeon 1978, xv (McKeon's Foreword); Bowles 2007, 131; Olivelle 2004*a*, 505.

23. See chapters 4 and 5 on Buddhist and Brahmanical views of the householder, and Aśvaghoṣa's riposte to Brahmanical views in chapter 13.

While there are also good reasons to emphasize Aśoka's secular motivations in implementing such a value, beginning from what we now know about MRE 1, I see no possibility to doubt his growing seriousness as a Buddhist.[24] Among three edicts addressed to the Buddhist Saṃgha (Lamotte 1988, 234–38), in a Minor Pillar Edict (MPE 1) at Sāñchī, he condemns schism in the order, or in local saṇghas, both among monks and nuns (Bloch 1950, 152–53; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 67–68; Tieken 2000). And in the Bairāṭ-Calcutta Edict (formerly called the Bhābhrā Rock Edict; Falk 2006*b*, 106), he says, "Whatever the Lord Buddha has said is of course well said. But it is proper for me to enumerate the texts which express the true *dhaṃma* (*saddhaṃma*) and which may make it everlasting" or "enduring,"[25] whereupon he cites seven such texts (only three of which can be identified canonically "with anything approaching unanimity"[26]), and states it to be his desire that the majority of monks and nuns listen to them often and reflect on them, and the same for layfolk of both sexes (Bloch 1950, 155). We shall see further evidence of Aśoka's familiarity with monastic concerns and idioms—as with the powerful and potentially provocative term "true" or "real *dhaṃma*" or "good law" (*saddhaṃma*), just mentioned, which can be used by Buddhist authors with a certain edge.[27] *Saddhaṃma* occurs just this once in the edicts (Bowles 2007, 131), but clearly in a telling fashion—indeed as the only case in the edicts where *dhaṃma* occurs in a compound as the second rather than the first member (Olivelle 2005*b*, 127). It is likely, since the Bairāṭ-Calcutta Edict is directed to specifically Buddhist audiences, that it reflects insider language.[28]

24. See above, n. 2. Cf. Bloch 1950, 29, somewhat overstating the point: "Les édits d'Asoka sont des ordonnances d'inspiration bouddhique. . . . elles participent à la fois de la confession et du sermon." Incidentally, I see no merit in recent neo-Hindu arguments that the Aśokan edicts were not by Aśoka, but by later Buddhists reconstructing a gloried past, or even that Aśoka did not exist. Even without Falk's findings on MRE 1, such an argument is unconvincing, but MRE 1's locations make it totally incredible.

25. Nikam and McKeon 1978, 66, with "everlasting"; Bloch 1950, 154 has, more modestly, "propre á rendre la Bonne Loi durable (*saddhaṃme cilaṭṭitīke*)."

26. Schopen 1997, 24–25. Cf. Bloch 1950, 154–55 n. 6; Lamotte 1988, 234–37. See, however, Thapar 1997, who supposes Aśoka would have had familiarity with at least "some elements of the Buddhist canon" (281, 149).

27. See Nattier 1991, 66–68, "The term *saddharma* (Pāli *saddhamma*) occurs in some of the earliest layers of Buddhist literature." As she indicates, with Buddhists using *dharma* for the teachings of other leaders, "there was a need for a term that would refer specifically to 'the teachings of the Buddha Śākyamuni,' and it is precisely in this sense that the term *saddharma* first begins to appear" (67). Having gained wide circulation, by the first century BCE it could then be "the basis for the construction of another compound expression," meaning the "semblance," "image," or "shadow" of the "true *dharma*," that could describe transformations even within Buddhism. See further chapter 7.

28. Thapar 1997, 180 proposes that this edict would have been personal, addressed to two nearby Buddhist monasteries, and from late in Aśoka's reign.

B. A Comprehensive *Dhaṃma*

Given everything we have described from the personal and familial to the imperial and even the cosmic scale, it is fair to say that Aśoka did not shy away from seeing *dhaṃma* in a grand picture. Let me indicate five ways that he does this in more specifically social terms, and then in some further matters of detail.

1. Regarding the "ethical import" of his edicts, Bowles and Lamotte both mention Aśoka's repeated injunctions to be respectful and generous to Brahmins, Samaṇas, parents, teachers, elders, servants, slaves, the weak, and the poor.[29] Without saying what they are, Aśoka also says he has a respectful concern for the happiness of "all groups" or "classes" (*savvanikāyesu*; PE 6: Bloch 1950, 168; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 36). Although we shall see in chapter 4 that there are parallels and no doubt precedents in early Buddhist texts, this is the first time we find *dharma intended officially* as an ethic that would impact social groups high, low, and across the board. Yet as Olivelle 2010 notices, Aśoka never uses the term *varṇa* or its hierarchical theory, and mentions Brahmins along with Samaṇas (and as we have seen, sometimes without them) only as a religious group, and not in a caste hierarchy. When the Greek ambassador Megasthenes resided at the Mauryan court in Pāṭaliputra in around 300 BCE during the reign of Candragupta, Aśoka's grandfather, he met a sevenfold division of Indian society that was not reconciled to the Brahmanical *varṇa* theory (Karttunen 1997, 82–83; Bronkhorst 2007, 361 n. 22), which Aśoka also thoroughly ignores.
2. As Nikam and McKeon observe, "Far from restricting Dharma to the tenets and practices of a single religion, Aśoka asserts . . . that Dharma is cultivated in all religions and sects, and he seeks to advance Dharma in all men whatever their religious affiliations; and, true to this purpose, he instructs Buddhists . . . to pay more attention to Buddhist texts on Dharma"[30]—as we have seen, probably holding in reserve some Buddhist sense of "the true *dhaṃma*." Such an intent is also carried to peoples on and beyond the imperial borders.

29. Bowles 2007, 130; Lamotte 1988, 231. For the most extended lists, see RE 9 and 13. Lubin 2005, 80 n. 7 observes that while Aśoka speaks of giving to both Sramaṇas and Brahmins in the same breath, "when particular acts of patronage are mentioned, it is almost always the Buddhists who are the beneficiaries."

30. Nikam and McKeon 1978, 20–21, citing RE 12 and "MRE 3" (the Bairāṭ-Calcutta Edict, just mentioned, which encourages the study of seven texts), and offering this take on the latter.

3. Such a universal *dhaṃma* takes on legal ramifications for the king and the state beyond anything envisioned in the early *dharmasūtras*. In PE 4, "controllers" or "provincial governors" are told that uniformity is desirable in legal procedures and in punishments; they should therefore give convicted prisoners who are condemned to death a three days' respite for appeals, and then, should no appeal be forthcoming, provision for them to prepare for the other world by giving gifts or fasting (Bloch 1950, 165; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 60–61). Likewise, after the Kalinga war, in this still unpacified country,[31] in one of his two additional Kalinga edicts Aśoka reminds his judicial officers in cities there that no one should be submitted to unjust imprisonment or torture without reason; when this happens and a prisoner dies, many suffer (Bloch 1950, 137–39; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 62–63). As with the suffering from the Kalinga war itself that provoked his famous "change of heart," Aśoka remains focused on suffering.
4. Yet, in conquering Kalinga, beyond even the bloodshed and deportation he caused, Aśoka reflected: "This weighs even more on the beloved of the gods: Brahmins, Samaṇas, and those of other communities (*paśaṃdā*, *praṣaṃda*), householders (*gih[i]tthā*, *grahatha*) who practice obedience to superiors, obedience to fathers and mothers, obedience to gurus, perfect courtesy with regard to friends, familiars, companions, and relatives, with regard to slaves and domestics, and firmness in the faith, are all victims of the violence, the killing, or of separation from those who are dear to them. . . ." (RE 13: Bloch 1950, 126–27; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 27–28). Without saying so explicitly, Aśoka is admitting that he has brought suffering to those who "do" *dharma*. Indeed, Aśoka implies that some people are what could be called "sources of *dharma*": the "gift of *dhaṃma*" (*dhaṃmadānaṃ*) is imparted when "Father, son, brother, master, friend, acquaintance, or even neighbor say, 'This is good.' 'This ought to be done (*sādhu ida kattavyaṃ*)'" (RE 11: Bloch 1950, 120; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 45; cf. RE 9). These ideas do find counterparts in the early *dharmasūtras*.[32]
5. Finally, such matters are tempered by wisdom. As Lamotte remarks, Aśoka's usage of *dhaṃma* recalling past kings is paralleled in Indian

31. See the second additional Kalinga Edict, by which Aśoka wishes to reassure the "unconquerred peoples" and "border peoples" there (Nikam and McKeon 1978, 53–54).

32. In the late PE 7, Aśoka also says, "Whatever good deeds I have done the people have imitated, and they have followed them as a model."

> "descriptions of lay morality scattered throughout the ancient anthologies of universal wisdom" and in passages "dispersed throughout the canonical writings."[33]

This sense of the comprehensive applicability of *dhaṃma* also carries down to minute detail, as can be seen in a number of areas. One of these is the edicts' dislike of festivals and critique of useless rites. Having first sought to undercut popular festivals in MRE 1, in RE 1, Aśoka "banned religious assemblies (*samājās*) except for those that propagate his *dhaṃma*,"[34] although he allowed, as we have seen, for new festivities "summoning people to tableaus of celestial palaces, tableaus of elephants, balls of fire, and other divine displays." Although we may now see this as directed primarily, or at least initially, at popular non-Brahmanical fairs, it would also have impacted Brahmins. As Olivelle indicates, citing RE 1, "the Aśokan insistence on not killing . . . referred in a special way to sacrificial killing. . . . This downgrading, if not the abolishing, of animal sacrifice cut at the very heart of Brahmanical self-definition as the guardians of the sacrifice, . . . [which] assured rain, prosperity, and social harmony" (Olivelle 2005*b*, 131–32). Aśoka also claims that ceremonies performed on the occasions of "sicknesses, marriages of sons and daughters, children's births, and journeys," and especially the "many diverse, trivial, and meaningless ceremonies" performed by women, are of "little use" in this world and none in the next. This would probably include a generalized reference to Brahmanical domestic or *gṛhya* rites. In contrast, "the ceremony of *dhaṃma*" (*dhaṃmamaṅgala*) that "consists in proper treatment of slaves and servants, reverence to teachers, self-mastery in the presence of living beings, and liberality to Samaṇas and Brahmins" does bear fruit in this world and the next (RE 9: Bloch 1950, 113–15; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 46–47). Here, as in a number of edicts (RE 6, 11, 13: PE 1, 3, 4; both additional Kalinga edicts), Aśoka addresses a concern that one also finds in teachings of the Buddha: that the *dhaṃma* is pertinent, especially for laymen, to happiness in both this and the other world. Fruitful ceremonial can take the form of the "gift of *dhaṃma*" (*dhaṃmadāna*) (RE 11) or the reduction or elimination of killing animals.

Another area implying nuanced applicability of *dhaṃma* to varied detail is linguistic. As noticed by Bowles and Olivelle, *dhaṃma* occurs in the edicts

33. Lamotte 1988, 228; cf. Halbfass 1988, 330, who sees Aśoka as exemplifying the tendency to "ethicize and universalize" the "golden rule": something resisted by Kumārila's Mīmāṃsā, but also found in the *Pañcatantra*, the *Mbh*, etc.

34. Alles 1994, 172, n. 52. Cf. Bloch 1950, 91 n. 10 on the probable range of meaning of samāja, in RE 1, including ordinary gatherings and religious and festive ones.

with significantly high frequency as the first member of compounds.[35] In this position, "rather than being qualified, therefore, it is in fact the qualifier" (Bowles 2007, 131); for Aśoka, "everything is *dharmic*" (Olivelle 2004*a*, 505). As Bowles observes, this is "a remarkable contrast" to a predominant usage of *dharma* in Brahmanical texts as the second term in compounds to describe the "laws" or "duties" of social groups and people in particular social positions, as in *kuladharma* ("clan-" or "family-*dharma*"), *varṇadharma* ("caste-*dharma*"), and *rāja-dharma* ("king's *dharma*"). According to Bowles, in the Aśokan edicts, "*dharma* is never qualified in this way at all," and the only usage of *dhaṃma* as the "last member of a compound" is the above-mentioned "*saddhaṃma*, the true *dharma*, an obviously different case" (Bowles 2007, 131).

Finally, a third area of especially concentrated application of *dhaṃma* to varied and minute detail is that of meditational self-scrutiny. In the additional Kalinga edict that warns of the deleterious consequences of unjust imprisonment and torture, Aśoka says, "That is why you must wish to practice impartiality. But it is not practiced with tendencies like jealousy, anger, cruelty, haste, stubbornness, laziness, and fatigue. One must wish to escape these tendencies. The principle of all this is to avoid inconsistency and haste in the exercise of your functions" (Bloch 1950, 138; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 62). Such an emphasis, which is not absent from other rock edicts,[36] increases in the late-life pillar edicts, where it concurs with a concern for individual merit and an intensified sense of "sin." In PE 1, we find, "It is difficult to conquer this world and the next without intense love of *dhaṃma* (*aggāyā dhaṃmakāmatāyā*), intense vigilance, intense docility, intense wariness, and intense energy" (Bloch 1950, 161; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 41). In PE 2, Aśoka asks, "*Dhaṃma* is good. But what is *dhaṃma*? It is the absence of the causes of sin, abundance of good acts, pity, giving, truthfulness, and purity (*dayā dāne sacce socaye*)" (Bloch 1950, 162; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 41). In PE 3, after remarking that a man is more prone to notice his worthy deeds than his evil ones, Aśoka says, "This is truly a difficult examination. But he must consider matters in this way: 'What one calls access to sin, that is to know wickedness, hardness, anger, pride, and envy. Now I must not

35. Olivelle counts thirty-one instances (2004*a*, 509 n. 28), several of which are noticed in this chapter, including *dhaṃmalipi*, *dhaṃṃayāttā*, *dhaṃmaparipucchā*, *dhaṃmavijaya*, *dhaṃmamahāmātā*, *dhaṃmamaṅgala*, *dhaṃmavaḍḍhi*, *dhaṃmadāna*, *dhaṃmaniyama*, *dhaṃmaguṇa*, *dhaṃmatthaṃba* for Aśoka's "moral pillars," and *dhaṃmānusāsana* and *dhaṃmanusista* for "moral instruction." See also Nikam and McKeon 1978, xiii, 44–45 n. 6.

36. See RE 5 as cited above on the difficulty of doing good deeds and the easiness of bad ones; RE 10 on Aśoka's strivings for the other world by escaping bad tendencies, which requires intense effort whether one is small or great, but is most difficult for the great (Bloch 1950, 118–19; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 48).

wish to lose myself for these causes.' Here is what he should consider above all: 'This counts for this world, this counts for the other world.'" (Bloch 1950, 163; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 48). In PE 7, his very last, which, like some of the earlier rock edicts starts off about kings of the past, Aśoka states that "progress in *dhaṃma* (*dhaṃṃavaḍḍhi*) among men has been obtained by only two means; by *dhaṃma* rules (*dhaṃmaniyamena*) and by meditation (*nijjhattiyā*). But on this point, rules are of little consequence; meditation is more important . . . it is by meditation that one obtains the greatest progress in *dhaṃma* in view of the conservation of beings and abstention from killing animals" (Bloch 1950, 172; Nikam and McKeon 1978, 40 [curtailed]). As Lamotte observes, "He listed the 'virtues of the Law' (*dharmaguṇa*)[37] the practice of which ensures happiness in this world and the next. . . . These lists of faults and virtues are very similar to those found in the Buddhist writings, particularly the Abhidharma" (Lamotte 1988, 232). Indeed, we may say that Aśoka was finding everyday terms with which to encourage his officials and people to practice the "discrimination of *dharmas*." In quasi- or proto-Abhidharmic terms, Aśoka would be seeking to clarify how such "virtues of the Law" can be cultivated as "mental events" (*dharmas*) by "right effort," "right mindfulness," and the "discrimination of *dharmas*." We shall return to this subject in chapter 4.

Aśoka's interest for the history of *dharma* is not limited to his own times. As several scholars have observed from different angles, Brahmins at large might or might not have ignored the Buddha, but Aśoka's usage of the term *dhaṃma* to define a new imperial non-Brahmanical program was something that they could not ignore.[38] In particular, Brahmins who preserved areas of Vedic expertise would have found themselves confronted by a campaign that deemed their rites and knowledge imperially useless, and implicitly treated them as having the lesser of two moralities and unaccepted views, whatever they were at this time, of the past, the future, and the legitimate roles of kings. In reply, they would produce texts that featured Brahmanical *dharma* in new post-Vedic genres. As mentioned in chapter 1, such motivations for producing new texts on *dharma* might also have spurred the composition of the earliest of

37. Such a linking of *dharma* and *guṇa* gives a foretaste of *dharma* as virtuous quality and merit in the *Mbh*, where there is more or less an equation between such compound phrases as *sarvaguṇopeta* and *sarvadharmopeta*, "endowed with every virtue (quality, merit)." See Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 192–228.

38. See Olivelle 2004*a*, 505: Aśoka's usage of the term *dhaṃma* to define "a new imperial ideology" of the Mauryans was a factor that made the Buddhist *dharma* something that could not be "ignored even by the scholastic Brahmins working within the vedic *śākhās*"; Bowles 2007, 125: "his ideology," which "seems heavily influenced by many of the values most vigorously pursued" by the non-Brahmanical Śramaṇa movements, was "perhaps a key moment in the rise of the concept [*dharma*] to a central status within the various Indian intellectual and religious traditions."

these Brahmanical texts slightly before Aśoka, since his two Mauryan predecessors, his grandfather Candragupta (ca. 321–297) and his father Bindusāra (ca. 297–272), already favored other non-Brahmanical Śramaṇa movements, Jainism and Ājīvikism, respectively, and Alexander the Great had left Greek and Iranian ideas of empire in India from 327 BCE on. But it is a good working hypothesis that even the earliest Brahmanical *dharma* texts would be no earlier than these three earliest Mauryans.

3

A Vedic History of *Dharma*

This chapter will attempt to set our bearings on the early history of *dharma* in Brahmanical texts of the Vedic canon, beginning with the oldest source, the *Ṛgveda* (henceforth in this chapter *ṚV*). Patrick Olivelle's contribution to the 2004 *Journal of Indian Philosophy* volume that he edited, titled "The Semantic History of Dharma The Middle and Late Vedic Periods" (2004*a*), was cited in chapter 2 for its observation that the term *dharma* is not statistically, at least, significant in Vedic Brahmanical texts before the Aśokan edicts. Olivelle offers a new hypothesis on the *innovative* character of the early Buddhist usage of *dharma* toward the end of the Vedic period. This innovation lay in seizing on a pre-Buddhist usage having to do with the relationship between kings and their Vedic divine model, the god Varuṇa, to co-opt this *royal* term as chief among a number of royal symbols by which, as leader of an ascetic movement, the Buddha could lay claim "to a new type of royal authority." Shortly after this middle-to-late Vedic period and the rise of early Buddhism, Aśoka Maurya would have then put the Buddha's "royal" transformation of *dharma* to imperial and more secular work. In reaction to the Aśokan usage, post-Aśokan Brahmanical would likewise put the king at the center in such texts as *The Laws of Manu*, and the two Sanskrit epics would likewise put the king at the center, as I will do in this chapter. Olivelle's propositions demand careful scrutiny, but I believe most of them bear up to it.

A. *Dhárman* in Early and Later Ṛgvedic Usages

As Olivelle recognizes in citing the kingship of Varuṇa, the *ṚV*, India's oldest textual source, becomes the indispensable starting point for a history of *dharma*—even though scholarly treatments of *dharma* usually start well after it or pay it bare lip service by inadequate summaries and anachronistic backreadings. Such distortions are important to clear out of the way. Here are two watchwords as to what *dharma* in the *ṚV* is not.[1]

1. It is not a Ṛgvedic "cosmic order." This is the most common backreading. The classical term *dharma* is seen as "replacing" a Ṛgvedic notion of "cosmic order," allowing one to backread this understanding of *dharma* into Vedic *dhárman* (the precursor formation in the *ṚV*). The term said to mean "cosmic order" in the *ṚV* is *ṛta*. Ṛgvedic *ṛta*, best translated as "truth," is a cosmic order resonant with the "truth" of the Ṛgvedic hymns and mantras. The *ṚV* poets first discerned it in their inspired compositions, and those who recite their verses ritually can keep this cosmic order functioning. Since *ṛta* no longer means "cosmic order" in classical Hinduism, and *dharma* sort of does, it has been convenient to think that *dharma* not only replaced *ṛta* but must always have had some such implication itself.[2] But *dhárman* did not *mean* "cosmic order." Moreover, the ideas of "cosmic order" to which *dharma* becomes attached differ from the Ṛgvedic "cosmic order" denoted by *ṛta*. Classical usages of *dharma* put the term into the service of a *socio*cosmic order that is more ideology than poetry or ritual implementation. The Vedic "cosmic order" is something else.
2. *Dhárman* is not *karman*. This second type of backreading, also common but more diverse, interprets *dhárman* through lenses of *karman*, "action." It is more diverse because *karman/karma* itself has different meanings and usages: from its earliest sense of "ritual act" to the later sense of a "law of karma" that relates actions to reincarnation. While only the first of these meanings has been read directly into Ṛgvedic

1. I leave aside universalizing neo-Hindu backreadings, for, as Halbfass shows (1988, 334–48), these have been applied mainly to Upaniṣadic and classical texts.

2. See Horsch 2004, 424–25, 434, 441, tracing the "origins" of *dhárman* to cosmogonic myth; 427: "It is the 'supporting hold- [*Halt*] giving power', through which Varuṇa accomplishes his action of making the cosmos stable." Cf. Mahoney 1998, 107: "In early Vedic texts *dharman* refers to an established or proper mode of conduct that supports or helps maintain the continuing health of the world. According to one such visionary [referring to the poet of *ṚV* 6.70.1], for example, it was through Varuṇa's performance of his *dharman* that the sky was raised above the land. . . . The Vedic idea of *dharman* stands as precedent for the later idea of *dharma* as responsible, proper activity that supports the world."

usages of *dhárman*, a fusion of the two has also been smuggled into the mix. This is the idea that *dharma* as "duty" and *karma* as "act" imply each other if one acts in accord with "one's own *dharma*" (*svadharma*) in "maintaining the cosmic order." Such a backreading is found frequently in popular approaches to the *ṚV*, where one can read that each god "performs" his "own *dharman*" by acting in such a cosmically supportive fashion.[3] Certain classical texts, most notably the *Bhagavad Gītā*, do make an equation between "one's own *dharma*" and "one's own *karma*," but that does not justify its wholesale importation back into the *ṚV*. Unlike *dhárman*, both *ṛta* and *karman* are indeed governing concepts[4] in the *ṚV*, and *karma* remains one through all Indian traditions. But neither of them ever governs the history of *dharma*. I am not persuaded by attempts to reduce *dharma* to a species of "action."[5]

Related to these points is a further misconception. Ṛgvedic *dhárman* is not defined by usages in the plural. Here we have the rarity of being misled by Wilhelm Halbfass, who writes, "*Dharman* usually appears explicitly in the plural or possesses at least potentially plural function in meaning" (1988, 314)—the concluding clause is left unexplained, and clearly begs the question. Of the sixty-seven instances in the *ṚV* where one can determine whether *dhárman* or *dharmán* is singular or plural, there are thirty-nine singulars to twenty-eight plurals! Halbfass builds on this erroneous point to draw a contrast with *karman* that entails a backreading from the later *dharmasūtra/dharmaśāstra* literature: "While *dharma*, in its very essence, is subdivided into a countless number of individual obligations and may, in keeping with the original pluralistic meaning of the word, be characterized as the very sum or system of such rules, the doctrine of *karma* develops one central and universal principle..." (322). Anne Monius has repeated the error while compounding it with the usual reduction of *dharma* to "acts": "In the Vedic world of *yajña*, 'sacrifice'...dharma...significantly occurs more often in the plural. Found more than sixty times in the Rig Veda alone, dharma and its derivatives signal ritual acts..." (2005, 331). The mistake has also been compounded by Rupert Gethin in an attempt to relate Buddhist usages to prior Brahmanical ones when he proposes "practices" as an "inherited" meaning of the Buddhist plural usage of *dhammas* (2004, 530–35). In fact, all three authors

3. See again Mahoney on "performance of his *dharman*" in the previous note, and further, 1998, 108 on *dharman* as "closely associated with" *karman*, translating *dharman* as "established rites" in 5.26.6 and "proper ritual performance" in 8.43.24; cf. Miller 1985, 102: "each [Ṛgvedic] god [is] following the law proper to his own being, in other words his own *dharman*" (1985, 102).

4. Cf. Brereton 2004, 449, as cited: compared with *ṛtá* and *vratá*, each carrying forward Indo-Iranian meanings, *dhárman* was "not a central term in the Ṛgvedic lexicon."

5. For a different approach on this point, see Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 106–7.

refer immediately to *ṚV* 10.90.16, the closing verse of the famous hymn to the Primal Man (*Puruṣasūkta*), to exemplify the point about plural usages implying "acts." But that is a late *ṚV* verse—indeed, precisely the one that might first suggest a link between *dhárman* in the plural and the origins of the caste system; and, as we shall see, there is probably a better way to translate its plural usage of *dhárman*. Indeed, *ṚV* 10.90 should not be backread either. As one would expect of any text or language state, the interplay of singulars and plurals can be illuminating—but not in the sense of pluralized laws or practices that fractionalize from, or consolidate into, a singular "law" or "order."

I will proceed from the view that usages of the term *dhárman* do not begin from a cosmological/mythical, ritual,[6] legal, or religious context, or as an exhibit of cosmological/mythical, ritual, legal, or religious thinking,[7] but as a poetic conceit, a poetically crafted concept. Evident as this point should be when studying oral poetry, I am aware of no exception to the rule that scholarly interpretations of *ṚV* usages of *dhárman* do not take this primary consideration sufficiently into account when delegating the term originally to one or another such zone. The term *dharma*, which comes to exemplify Hindu orthopraxy, "right practice," takes off from a new idea.[8]

The *ṚV* will thus be the initial focus of this chapter. Olivelle's hypothesis that royal authority is a major strain of the early meaning of *dharma* finds support in Brereton's essay on "*Dhárman* in the *Rigveda*" that precedes Olivelle's in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy* volume. Indeed, Brereton's study not only fills in a great need but makes it now possible to continue to explore Ṛgvedic usages in ways that would not have been possible without his contribution. As mentioned, we shall treat the relation between *dhárman*, *dharma*, and kingship as the central topic of this chapter, and frame that center with discussions of *dharma* as an enigma. Both topics call for some introductory discussion of the chronological levels of the *Ṛgveda*.

In opening his study as a "reevaluation of the history of *dhárma*," Brereton begins with several important observations. "Since *dhárman* is a developing term in *Ṛgveda*, its meaning reflects directly its etymology and form. And, happily, the formation of *dhárman* is transparent. It is derived from √*dhṛ* 'uphold, support, give foundation to' and a -*man* suffix. Therefore, it denotes a thing which upholds or supports, or, more simply, a 'foundation'. The word *dharmán*, a noun of agent, then designates an 'upholder' or 'foundation-giver'" (2004, 450).

6. See Pollock's view cited below in this paragraph.

7. Brereton 2004, 471: "The uses of the term illustrate the breadth of *dhárman* and suggest that the liturgical sense of the term considered earlier is a reflection of the character of the *Ṛgveda* rather than that of the word *dhárman* itself."

8. Jamison 2010 makes a similar point about the novelty, as it can be traced into its near-emergence in Ṛgvedic poetry, that a sacrificer's wife is a good idea for an effective sacrifice.

Sixty-three usages of *dhárman* and four of *dharmán* is "not a small number," but "this relatively modest frequency of *dhárman* nonetheless implies that it was not a central term in the Ṛgvedic lexicon or in Indian culture of the Ṛgvedic period" (2004, 449).[9] Yet even if not "central," "*dhárman* is thoroughly established in the text, since the word is attested in all its chronological levels," with "increasing frequency in the younger layers" (450). Moreover, unlike Ṛgvedic *ṛta* ("truth") and *vratá* ("commandment"), which *are* "central," and, with their Avestan cognates, point back to "significant roles in the old Indo-Iranian religious vocabulary," *dhárman*, at least in its Ṛgvedic meanings, does not have such a prehistory. For Brereton, this means that in contrast to the other two terms, "discussion of *dhárman* can reasonably begin with the *Ṛgveda*" (449). Indeed, setting the old Latin cognate *firmus*, and extrapolations from it, aside (see, e.g., Zaehner 1966, 2–3), it would seem that we could also suspect that *dhárman* could be a Ṛgvedic coinage, a new term with which to conjure.[10]

Brereton offers extensive discussion of verses that relate *dhárman* to gods who are called king and lord, beginning with Varuṇa, but also opening up the possibility of a history of this set of associations within the *ṚV* itself. It will thus be important to work from the relative chronology of the *ṚV*'s ten books that Brereton outlines (2004, 450), and which has gained broad acceptance since it was refined by Oldenberg in 1888. That chronology recognizes six stages of *ṚV* composition:

1. Old Family Books: Book 2, associated with the Bhṛgu poets; Book 4, linked with the Gautama poets; Book 5, with the Atri poets; and Book 6, with the Bharadvāja poets
2. Young Family Books: Book 3, associated with the Viśvāmitra poets; and Book 7, with the Vasiṣṭha poets
3. Book 1 and most of Book 8 (8.1–46/8, 8.60–103)[11]
4. Book 9, a collection of hymns to Soma, attributed to various authors, prominent among them being the Kaśyapa poets
5. Book 10
6. 8.49–59 (the so-called Vālakhilya hymns, treated in the *ṚV* itself as an appendix or *khila*)

9. Olivelle 2005*b*, 123 and n. 4 also notes fourteen usages of *vidharman* in the *ṚV*.

10. My thanks to Joel Brereton, June 17, 2007 e-mail, for further clarification on these points: "When I said that *dhárman* was Indic and not Indo-Iranian, I meant that Iranian did not have a corresponding term *darman* with anything like the significance of *dhárman* in Sanskrit. (Middle Persian and modern Persian do have a formally corresponding *darman*, but the word means 'medicine.') The root *dhṛ*, however, has a corresponding and very well attested root *dar/d[ə = schwa]r* in Iranian." I had asked him about an instance where Jamison 2007, 37 cites *Yasht* 44.4 where *dərətā . . . yaogət* has been translated "Which man has upheld . . . ? . . . Who yoked . . . ?" or "Who holds . . . ? Who yokes?" Brereton also comments: "I'm not certain whether Latin *firmus* is etymologically related. I checked Mayrhofer [1986–2001, I: 779, 780] and he says that a derivation of firmus from IE **dher-mo* is unsure."

11. For a further analysis of the material of these books that will not effect the discussion here, see Witzel 1995, 309–10; 1997*a*, 262.

Although the Atri hymns mention the Yamunā River to the east and the Bharadvāja hymns the Gaṅgā still further to the east, the Old Family Books reflect the earliest polity of the five tribes, centered on the Pūru tribe, which had settled mainly in the Punjab (Witzel 1995*b*, 318). The Young Family Books then center more specifically on the Kurukṣetra area of eastern Punjab and reflect the ascendancy of the Bharata clan over the Pūrus through the Battle of the Ten Kings (328–37).

While the situation of *ṚV* oral poetry is such that each new generation had to reconstitute its "canon" by memorizing the hymns of earlier generations, new poets often worked from older models by adapting older formulas, verses, and themes to new contexts—among them changing political configurations, including changing conceptions of both earthly and divine kings. Taking the Family Books together, Varuṇa is certainly the main divine king connected with *dhárman*, whereas human *rājas*, with no mention of their having any special association with *dhárman*, can better be called tribal chieftains. The Family Books describe such chieftains in two contrasting modes: as leaders in *yoga*, which for this context means "harnessing" for a battle march in search of booty; and as leaders during *kṣema*, "peaceful settlement." Although nowhere is a chieftain's activities mapped with *dhárman*, some passages suggest that a *rāja* could take on both of these leadership roles. According to Whitaker 2006, the celebrated King Trasadasyu, who seems to have unified the Pūrus and the other four early tribes by a horse sacrifice or Aśvamedha (Witzel 1995*b*, 326, 329), has such a dual profile in *ṚV* 4.38: a hymn to "Indra-Varuṇa" as a deity-pair in which one senses a possible correlation of Varuṇa with peaceful settlement and Indra with the battle-trek.[12] Indeed, we shall note a verse in one of the Atri hymns that says that Mitra and Varuṇa, according to their "Foundation" (*dhármaṇā*), give "peaceful settlements that endure (*dhrúvakṣemā*)" (*ṚV* 5.72.2ab). But nothing would allow one to correlate Mitra or Varuṇa's *dhárman* with war. Victorious war will not be compounded with *dharma* until the classical period.[13]

12. Cf. 7.89.8, enjoining Varuṇa for both *yoga* and *kṣema*; 10.89.10 where Indra is invoked for both. I thank Whitaker too for his translation of *ṚV* 5.37.4–5: "This king does not waver/falter, in/by whom Indra drinks the sharp/intense cow-befriended *sóma*. With his fighters/true men he drives (cows/wealth) here; he smashes Vṛtra/Obstacle; he dwells in peace, fostering the settlements, the one whose name is 'Having Good-Portions.'// He will thrive/foster in times of settled peace. He will overcome in times of harnessing (for war). He will conquer simultaneously both opponents that have come together. He will be dear to the Sun, dear to Fire; the one with pressed *sóma* will ritually serve Indra."

13. The Buddha speaks of Sakka (Indra) winning "a victory by means of righteousness itself" (*Saṃyutta Nikāya* 11.6 (Bodhi trans. 2000, 325). Aśoka inscribes *dhaṃmavijaya* on his Kalinga Edict (RE 13). See Bowles 2007, 128–29 and n. 191, calling attention to occurrences of *dharmavijaya* in the *Rājadharma* section of the *Mbh*, presumably meaning the concept of "lawful conquest" rather than the actual compound term, which is not found in either unit that he cites (*Mbh* 12.59, 12.96). Cf. *Mbh* 12.97.1 (*adharmavijaya* or "unlawful conquest") and of course *BhG* 2.31 ("there is nothing more salutary for a Kṣatriya than a war that is lawful [*dharmyād hi yuddhāt śreyo 'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate*])"; 2.33 (*dharmyaṃ saṃgraham* or "lawful war"), on which see chapter 11.

As to Books 1, 8, and especially 9 (consisting of hymns to Soma), there would be the possibility that some of their hymns, not to mention themes and formulae, would be older than their places in this chronology.

Finally, Book 10 marks the completion of the *ṚV* canon that was apparently undertaken in establishing what Witzel has called India's first state, that of the Kurus (1995, 337), now centered in "the modern (eastern) Panjab and Haryana" (1997*a*, 266) and expanding Vedic culture into the upper Gaṅgā-Yamunā valleys (1995, 335). For this Kuru "super-tribe," we can now call its *rājas*, who seem to have elevated themselves from among the Bhāratas or branched off from them, true "kings" (Witzel 1997*a*, 264–68; 1997*b*). These later *ṚV* books mark the rise of a more centralized kingship coordinated with the canonization of the *ṚV Collection* (*Saṃhitā*), and also with the need to redefine in relation to usages of *dhárman* the balance of royal divine power between Varuṇa and other gods, but mainly Indra. From the Old Family Books to Book 10, this canonization process itself and the geographical and political situations it reflects would seem to run from about the fourteenth to the twelfth centuries BCE. Whatever the status of Witzel's construction of the "Kuru 'state,'" I believe it has sufficient substance to give it hypothetical status to present a different picture from one advanced in many publications by Romila Thapar. According to Thapar, the "lineage based" or "clan based" society behind Vedic and "early" epic polities remained one "suggestive of tribal chiefships" (Thapar 2005*j*, 635) rather than kings, allowing for early strata of the Sanskrit epics to keep old Vedic legends about "chiefs" rather than "kings" alive as reflections of the "bardic" side of early Vedic oral culture (see Thapar 1993, 46–47, 136–41; [1999] 2002, 7–15, 38, 48; 2005*i*, 622–28; 2005*j-k*; 2005*m*, 711). For me, it is important, as I will emphasize, that even before the "Kuru 'state,'" Ṛgvedic poetry contrasted human chieftains with an "imperial" notion of divine kingship seen in Varuṇa. Witzel's "Kuru 'state'" provides a plausible moment from which to recognize that Vedic kings do become larger scale "kings." This bears on an idea I began to develop in chapter 1,[14] that the Sanskrit epics are not oral archives of old tribal legends about "chiefs" but rather written texts that construct an imagined "history" of "kings"—particularly in the *Mahābhārata* as the *itihāsa* ("history") of the

Bowles also (same note) cites *Arthaśāstra* [*KA*] 12.1.10ff. with the comment: "it is curious that while many scholars assume the *KA* dates from the time of Candragupta Maurya, and therefore use it to reconstruct Mauryan history, few if any then consider the consequences of it containing a supposedly Aśokan idea like *dharmavijaya*." *Dharmavijayin* occurs at *KA* 12.1.11–12: "The righteous conqueror is satisfied with submission. He [the weak king] should submit to him . . ." (Kangle [1972] 2003, 2: 460).

14. See further Hiltebeitel 2005*c*; 2010*b*; forthcoming-*a*; in press-*a*, chapter 4.

Kurus—and that these written texts were composed in the classical period drawing on post-"Kuru-'state'" models of kingship.

Now as Brereton remarks, "Interestingly, 7 of the 11 attestations of *dhárman* in the oldest Ṛgvedic layer occur within Book 5." That eleven is the total in the Old Family Books, and the statistic is still suggestive when one adds the Young Family Books, whose seven usages (counting one usage of *svádharman* at *ṚV* 3.21.2) make it seven of eighteen for all the Family Books. According to Brereton, this concentration presents the possibility that the "increasing occurrence in later books may partly reflect the influence of the Atri poets" of Book 5 (2004, 450). While there are reasons[15] to think they would not have been the earliest of the early clans of poet-priests to have their poems collected, I begin both of the following sections with their poems. The Atri poets were evidently the first to give concentrated thought to *dhárman*, and although I know of no evident reason for this, a sequence in one of their poems, *ṚV* 5.40.5–9, assembles a number of themes that might be connected with *dhárman* in telling how their eponymous ancestor Atri found the hidden sun by a "fourth formulation" (*bráhman*), healing it and freeing it from darkness after it had been punished for an act "contrary to commandment (*apa-vrata*)," and established it in heaven in the mid-day Soma pressing in a rapport with the gods Indra, Varuṇa with a likely allusion to Mitra, and probably Agni as the one who had punished the Sun for its violation, which was perhaps incest with the Sun's daughter Uṣas, the Dawn. While the word *dhárman* does not appear in these verses or even in later versions of the myth, we may at least feel our way into the Atri poets' treatment of *dhárman* through their ancestor's manner of restoring a fragile ritual order to a none too perfect world.[16]

B. *Dhárman* as Enigma

To claim an enigmatic meaning for Ṛgvedic *dhárman* is not to claim much, since Ṛgvedic poetry simply abounds in enigmatic verses. As we will observe with variations on the root √*dhṛ*, Ṛgvedic poets like to play with verbal resonances or soundplay and like to structure surprise into their poems by creative

15. Their mention of the Yamunā; their third of four positions in the order of the Early Family Books (Witzel 1995, 317–18, 326–28, 331–33).

16. See Jamison 1991, 138–42, 188–89, 248–57, 264–66, 271–75, 281–88, 297–303. For Jamison, it is Agni as "Svar-bhānu (possessing the light of the sun) Āsura [who] punished the sun for this violation of law and custom" (302)—that of incest with his daughter Uṣas, Dawn.

compositional devices, including framing, that affect the whole hymn.[17] I will now indicate ways in which specific verses use the word *dhárman* as a loaded enigmatic word. Let us begin with the Atri poets of Book 5.

Ṛgveda 5.15 is a hymn to Agni. The first verse calls him "Agni the support of goods." The fifth and last verse uses the same term for "support" to describe how the Atri poet imparts strength to Agni so that he may be helped to great wealth. This word for "support" is *dharúṇa*, a derivative of √*dhṛ* like *dhárman*. The poet shapes the hymn's soundplay by surrounding *dhárman* with these and other alliterative "supports" derived from √*dhṛ*.[18] Moreover, in opening and closing with verses mentioning *dharúṇa*, the poet uses a framing design familiar from many Ṛgvedic hymns of having a poem's first and last verses form a "ring" around the composition. Verse 2 is this hymn's concentration point regarding *dhárman*. Here, following one of the verbal derivatives of √*dhṛ*, *dhárman* is surrounded twice, this time close at hand, by *dharúṇa*:

> In making powerful the sacrifice in the highest heaven, they supported (√*dhṛ*) the truth (*ṛta*), itself a support (*dharúṇa*), by means of the truth (*ṛta*)/—they who have reached the men (= the gods) that have taken their seat upon the Foundation (*dhárman*) of heaven, upon the support (*dharúṇa*); they who, even though they themselves were born, (have reached) the unborn. (*ṚV* 5.15.2, slightly modifying Brereton trans. 2004, 451)

Two groups, each called "they," have reached heaven. The first refers to ancient poet-ritualists. By making the sacrifice powerful, they became semi-divine ancestors of the poet's family. The second are "men" but appear to be gods, since two things said about the first group are not said about them: the first group reached heaven by sacrifice and were born. In contrast, the apparently "unborn" "men" who got there first just sit "upon the Foundation, upon the *support* of heaven."

It does not seem that *dhárman*, mentioned only once, and the "supports" (*dharúṇa*) that surround it are simply interchangeable. *Dhárman* is set off by four usages of *dharúṇa*—two in this verse and two in the hymn's first and last verses.

17. See Jamison 2007, 35, 138 on the *ṚV* poet (*kavi*) as enigmatist; 79–80, 87, 95, 99 on ring composition; 76, 83–84, 97, 97, 107 on structure, rings, momentum, and movement; 82, 86–87, 104, 114 on "omphalos" verses; 103 on open-endedness, ambiguity, uncertainty, yet with closure; cf. 71, closed ritual system; 112–14 on "poetic repair"; cf. 61–64, 85–88.

18. As Brereton notes, T. J. Elizarenkova (1995, 152) describes *dharúṇa*, "support," "as the hymn's 'magic word' "—one that is "repeated and echoed by other derivatives of √*dhṛ* throughout the hymn." Like Warder 1971, 275, who speaks of "a good deal of word play" in verse 2, Elizarenkova says the "phonetic shape of the word [*dharúṇa*] has influenced the sound-play of the hymn," but adds, "it remains unclear what kind of information the poet intended to convey by this *Sprachmalerei*" (1995, 152). Geldner also calls the hymn "quite extraordinary" ("kein ganz gewöhnliches"; 1951, vol. 2, 15) for this run of usages related to this one verbal root.

Dharúṇa comes to evoke a fairly ordinary Ṛgvedic idea of "support" that is sometimes imaged quite concretely—for instance, where Indra "expanded the unshakable support that set the atmosphere within the framework of heaven" (*ṚV* 1.56.5), or where Soma is called heaven's "support pillar" (9.2.5; 74.2). The force of our hymn lies in zeroing in on *dhárman* not just as another "support" but as a "Foundation" that is left a little more mysterious than its four surrounding "supports," which look something like flying buttresses. Rather than being interchangeable with these "supports," *dhárman* is their inner "Foundation." We could call it the kernel of the poem: a Foundation wrought by poets for "making truths powerful" and "reaching" heaven. By the truth of their hymns and rites the poet's ancestors reached the gods on that well-supported Foundation.

A second illustration comes from one of the Later Family Books. The poet indicates that he reflects like a "fashioner" (*táṣṭā*, from √*takṣ*) upon his "inspired thought" (*manīṣā́m*), and goes on:

> And ask about the forceful generations of poets (*kavis*). Holding the mind (*manodhṛ́taḥ*) and performing well (*sukṛ́tas*), they fashioned (*takṣ*) heaven. / And these are your (= Indra's) leadings forth, which grow strong and which are won by thought; therefore they go now upon (that) Foundation (*dhárman*). (*ṚV* 3.82.2; slightly modifying Brereton trans. 2004, 462)

Here *dhárman* seems to be the "Foundation" of the older hymns by which the ancient sages "fashioned heaven" (plus "heaven and earth" as the next verse indicates) by holding (*dhṛ*) their minds firm or steady and by performing poems or rituals well, and upon which new generations of poets can still compose hymns that lead forth Indra to manifest himself in the Rigvedic here and now (cf. Brereton 2004, 462–63). The correlation of early and later generations of poets also describes the early ones while answering a seemingly rhetorical question about them: "And ask about the forceful generations of poets." Ask what? And who would be asking whom? One view is that the poet would be addressing himself. But he could also be addressing the former poets, whom the previous verse tells us he wishes he could see, or Indra, whom the hymn and the verse itself invoke.[19] We do not know whom the poet is addressing, but the response lies in something he calls upon himself and probably other poets to resolve by speaking about *dhárman*, a Foundation. The answer would thus be that *dhárman* lies in poetry or its inspired thought.

19. Cf. Johnson's notion (1980, 6–12, 53) of Ṛgvedic poetic "symposia" in which poets may have addressed their sacrificial patrons and "companions" or "friends" (*sákhis*)—that is, each other—with enigma verses (*bráhmans*, *brahmodyas*) while competing for recognition and patronage. I note, however, that Houben 2000, 501, puts the term "symposium" in quotes and says that Johnson provides "few philological data to support his view."

I would thus propose that with regard to *dhárman* the early *Ṛgveda* leaves us with two types of deeply wrought enigmas. One, exemplified by our first example, speaks of a Foundation above, with "supports" around and maybe below it. Depending on one's perspective, one could call this type a "highest Foundation" enigma, or a "turtles all the way down" enigma. In the first case, I suggest that readers keep in mind a repeatedly asked and resolutely unresolved question in the *Mahābhārata*: What is the highest *dharma*? And in the second I refer to an oft-cited "Indian story" about an Englishman who asked what was below the turtle, who held up the turtle who held up the world, and was told, "Ah, Sahib, after that it is turtles all the way down."[20] Either way, although it is couched in circularity and reflexivity, this is a vertical enigma.[21] In contrast, circularity and reflexivity are the hallmark of case two where the poet doubles back on his own inspired thought and finds its *dhárman* or Foundation in poetry. We could call this type a "sources of *dharma*" enigma, where *dharma*'s source and unfolding is located in the searching yet regulated minds of the learned: the Vedic poet-Sages or Ṛṣis. As we shall see, this kind of *dharma* lives on in many surprising places where ontologies of openness, epistemic strategies of open-endedness,[22] and ethics of friendship and hospitality continue to thrive.

Other enigmatic verses on *dhárman* focus more on conundrums of ritual:

> Being kindled according to the first Foundations (*prathamā́nu dhármā*), he is anointed with unguents—he that fulfills all wishes, / the flame-haired, ghee-cloaked, purifying Fire, who makes the sacrifice good—for the sake of sacrifice to the gods.

20. See Geertz's essay, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture," in Geertz 1973, 28–29. See Halbfass 1988, 61 and 473 n. 39: the image seems to have gained circulation from John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* II, 13, 19. According to an e-mail circulated on the INDOLOGY list-serve by Will Sweetman (April 2, 2010), it is "likely that Locke got the image from Samuel Purchas, in whose account of his pilgrimage (1614, 501), he writes that some Hindus . . . said, that the Earth was borne up by sevcn elephants; and the Elephants' feet stood on Tortoises, and they were borne by they know not what." According to Sweetman, this report may go back "to a letter by the Jesuit Father Emanual de Veiga (1549–1605), written at Chandagiri on 18th September, 1599."

21. Brereton reads this verse vertically: the Aṅgirases "have 'supported,' or given foundation, to the truth" (*ṛta*), which is the sacrifice itself as "the template and ultimate basis for the world. Since it is the basis for the world, the truth that is the sacrifice is itself a 'support.' Moreover, the Aṅgirases supported this truth 'by means of the truth,' that is, by means of the hymns they sang" (2004, 451). Brereton calls attention to *ṚV* 10.170.2 in which *dhárman* and *dharúṇa* are again both governed by one *divas* (genitive, "of heaven") in a context that speaks of "the support and foundation of heaven in which the sun is 'embedded'" (452).

22. See Halbfass 1988, 317: "The idea of a primeval opening, separation, holding apart is of extraordinary importance in Vedic cosmogony," with later oft-forgotten developments, which, in 1992, 29–32, he traces to a Ṛgvedic "ontology of openness" that would have priority over an "ontology of substance." See further Kuiper 1983, 66–89, 130–58; Brereton 2004, 481 on the primal opening between heaven and earth in *ṚV* 6.70.1; 1999, 258–59 on the openendedness and enigmatic riddle structure of *ṚV* 10.129 versus the drive to resolve it and bring it to closure in *TB* 2.8.9.3–7.

> The *hotar*-priest who is before (*hótā pūrvo*), o Fire, who performs sacrifice better, who sits now, as before, and is luck-bringing by nature—/following his Foundations (*tásyā́nu dhárma*), set forth the sacrifice, o you who are perceptive, and establish the rite for us in our pursuit of the gods. (*ṚV* 3.17.1, 5; Brereton trans. 2004, 460–61)

This is one of only two *ṚV* hymns (the other, 5.63, will be discussed in the next section) that refer to *dhárman* in both its first and last verses. Rather than the highest foundation, one learns here about the first foundations according to which Agni was first kindled as the prototype for continued sacrifices performed by "the *hotar*-priest who is before," whom Brereton finds among the "puzzling" things of this verse, since this *hotar* could be the current one seated before one of the ritual fires, or Agni himself (2004, 461). Similarly, *ṚV* 5.51.2 exhorts Agni:

> You whose insights are truth (*ṛ́tadhītaya*), come here. You whose foundations are real (*sátyadharmāṇo*), (come) to the rite. Drink with the tongue of fire. (Brereton trans. 2004, 465)

The sobriquet "you whose foundations are real" can relate a grounding in *satya*, "the real," to any number of paradoxes, as is borne out further in later hymns where it is used not only for Agni (1.12.7) but the unnamed god "Who" (10.121.9), for the dice in comparison with Savitar (10.34.8) as the god whose "Foundation" (4.53.3) is that he "compels," and likewise for Sūrya as he is being identified with Savitar (10.139.3; see Brereton 2004, 465, 470, 473–74).

Although we will not find that early enigmatic verses make much of a link between *dhárman* and kingship with reference to the Ādityas or Indra, with Agni and Soma we do meet ritual-based and poetry-inspiring deities who can also be kings. Agni, for instance, is called the "undeceivable king of the clans and overseer of the Foundations" (8.43.24), and is praised as a *kavi*, a "sage" or "poet," himself:

> Praise the sage Fire, whose Foundations are real at the rite (*kavím agním úpa stuhi satyádharmāṇam adhvaré*). (*RV* 1.12.7; Brereton trans. 2004, 465).

According to Brereton, "Here the 'real Foundations' are ritual foundations that Fire creates at the ritual performance" (Ibid.)—indeed, Agni is praised as a "poet-sage" whose "*dhármans* are real" in the poetry he inspires. Agni also causes 'foundations' to prosper—typically material goods (466)—beginning with things here below, but he is also messenger to the gods above:

> Being fully kindled, o Fire who conquers thousands, you made the Foundations (*dhármāṇi*) thrive, as the praiseworthy messenger of the gods. (*ṚV* 5.26.6; Brereton trans. 2004, 466)

Moreover, in that Agni "assumes the form of the universal fire, the Sun," he "becomes the foundation for all things" (Brereton 2004, 452):

> The pleasing oblation and drink is poured here in Fire, who finds the sun and touches heaven. / For him to bear the living world, and yes, to give it Foundation (*dhárman*) in conjunction with his own will, the gods will extend themselves. (*ṚV* 10.88.1; Ibid.)

Now, as Brereton says regarding this verse, "Like Fire, so also Soma supports heaven and earth," citing *ṚV* 9.86.9. But as 9.86.8–9, which I will get to shortly, indicates, Soma's "ritual foundations" are rather different from Agni's. For one thing, Agni may once be linked with *dhárman* as "king of the clans." But he is far more frequently linked with *dhárman*, and typified more generally, as one or another kind of priest (*hotṛ*, *purohita*, etc.; see Macdonnell [1898] 1974, 96–97). Soma's connections with *dhárman* are more typically linked with kingship. Sometimes this occurs in "contexts involving Varuṇa or *vratá*," which "are suggestive of Varuṇa" (Brereton 2004, 483). Thus in 10.167.3, "ritual consumption of *soma* occurs on the 'foundation' (*dhármaṇi*) of king Soma and Varuṇa" (478); and in 9.35.6, Soma as "the lord of foundation (*dhármaṇas pátiḥ*)" possesses royal "command" (*vratá*) (476; cf. 9.64.1). Sometimes Indra is the beneficiary, if not explicitly as a king, of the *soma* drink as a "foundation." Thus at 1.55.3, Indra becomes foremost among the gods by drinking *soma*, the "Foundation of great manliness"; at 10.44.1, he "dominates" by the "foundation" and bull-likeness he gets from drinking *soma*; at 10.50.6, *soma*-pressings in specific detail are made thick for his "foundations." And in the verses by which Brereton compares Soma with Agni, it is a matter of King Soma himself:

> King (Soma) hides himself in the ocean[23] (and) rivers; he follows the flood of the waters, when placed among the rivers. / (Soma) has mounted the woollen back (*sā́nu*) as he purifies himself, as the support (*dharúṇa*) of great heaven on the navel of the earth.
>
> Thundering like the back of heaven (*divó ná sā́nu stanáyan*), he has cried out, by whose Foundations (*dhármabhiḥ*) heaven and earth (have foundation). / He purifies himself, rediscovering again and again his partnership with Indra (*índrasya sakhyám*). Purifying himself, Soma sits in the vats. (*ṚV* 9.86.8–9; Brereton 1981, 124 for the translation of 8ab, and the rest from Brereton 2004, 452–53).

23. See Brereton 1981, 124 on *samudrá* here: the "ocean" as all waters, into which *soma* mixes, and as the source of rain.

Soma is the support (*dharúṇa*) of heaven "on the navel of the earth" and the one "by whose Foundations (*dhármans*) heaven and earth (have foundation)," who, in "rediscovering again and again his partnership (*sakhyám*) with Indra," is linked with *dhárman* not only in line with the foundation of heaven and earth "buttressed apart" by Varuṇa (6.70.1) but in harmony with the partnership or friendship of Viṣṇu with Indra that is made "according to the foundations of Mitra" (8.52.3).[24] Indeed, note again the juxtaposition between *dharúṇa* as a concrete "support" from "the navel of the earth," which recurs at 9.72.7a (Geldner 1951, vol. 3, 79), and the more elliptical[25] usage and more ambiguous sense in the unique mention of *dhárman*.

It is thus clear that it should not be enough to say that Soma's or Agni's foundation is "in the ritual" or "in the sacrifice," as Brereton does frequently, without recognizing that the "ritual foundation" of Agni and especially Soma[26] is often itself the subject of well-wrought enigmas. With this in mind, I would like to close this section by following up the thundering cries that Soma makes "like the back of heaven" having "mounted the woollen back as he purifies himself" on the way to the *soma* vats. As Brereton says, "The verse describes Soma's pressing and purification through the woollen filter, the 'back of heaven.'[27] The theme of the presence of *soma* throughout the universe dominates this hymn" (2004, 452). Such matters are further amplified in three verses of 9.97, the last two of which have been cited in other connections, but not looked at together:

> As he purifies himself, he purifies himself in the direction of the things dear to him—he the god that fills the gods with his own juice. / The *soma*-drop, clothing himself with his Foundations (*dhármāṇi*) following the ritual sequence, has enwrapped himself in the ten fingers on the woollen back (*sā́nu*).
>
> When the speech from the thought (*mánasas*) that is tracking him fashions (Soma) on the Foundation (*dhármaṇi*) of the foremost (thought),[28] or in the face of the herd, then the cows, bellowing as they wished, came to them, their delighted husband, the *soma*-drop in the vat.

24. As at 8.52.3 for *mitrá*, Geldner 1951, vol. 3, 79 has "Freundschaft" for *sakhyám* at 9.86.9. On Vedic Viṣṇu, see also Falk 1987.

25. Brereton 2004, 486, n. 5 says that with the "verbal gapping" here, *dhárman* "suggests a form of √*dhṛ*."

26. Brereton 2004, 454–59 notes uncertainties, paradox, likely double meanings, and at least triple possibilities where *dhárman* is mentioned in the Soma hymns of book 9. Cf. Pollock 1997, 402 for a rather too narrow ritualist interpretation of Vedic usages.

27. Citing Oberlies 1999, 154.

28. See Brereton 2004, 486 n. 11: "the completion of the ellipsis rests principally on the nearby *mánasas*" ("from the thought"), and also on his reading of 1.136.1ab.

> The divine giver of drops, sweller of drops, (goes) forth. As the truth and for the truth, the very wise one purifies himself. / He will become the Foundation-giver (*dharmá*), the king of what belongs to the community. He has been brought forward toward the world by the ten reins. (*ṚV* 9.97.12, 22–23; Brereton trans. 2004, 455, 456, 476)

Clothing himself in his foundations, which are the woollen filter that is itself the back of heaven through which his drops descend into the *soma* vat, *soma* is "tracked" by "speech" that is itself "from thought" on the "Foundation of the foremost (thought)." Passing through the ten fingers of the priest, *soma*, as king, thereby "becomes the Foundation-giver" of what belongs to the community. Again, we see both verticalities and reflexive circularities, and, more than this, a convergence of the two types of enigma mentioned earlier. For as Soma descends from the foundation above to give foundation below, he is tracked by inspired sacred speech that hangs on the bottomless foundation of thought in the form of mantras.[29]

Thus, where the "ritual foundations" of Agni, who works mainly from below, and Soma, who descends mainly from above, are concerned, *dhárman* relates to kingship and priesthood not as a matter of force majeur, as it does with the Ādityas or Indra. What is registered is the toil, fragility, mystery, and sheer poetic delectability of building a house on Fire and tracking liquid "foundations" from far above the clouds. As a memorable phrase from the next phases of Vedic literature will put it, "The gods love what is out of sight (*parokṣapriyā devāḥ*)."[30]

Indeed, enigmatic associations of *dhárman* proliferate in the late books in connection with the theme of ritual "foundations." The oft-cited verse at *ṚV* 10.90.16—beginning, "With the sacrifice the gods sacrificed the sacrifice: these were the first Foundations, and those, its greatnesses, follow to heaven's vault . . ."—is a case in point. As will be noted in the next section, the verse, enigmatic enough as it stands in the *Puruṣasūkta*, seems to be borrowed from the famous *Asya vāmasya* "riddle hymn." In that hymn, if Jan Houben is right, the identical verse *ṚV* 1.164.50 may be contextualized not only as one of the hymn's enigmas in which the "greatnesses" reaching up to heaven's vault could refer to the column of steam and flames that rises from a heated pot (the *gharma* pot) in the preclassical *pravargya* ritual but also linked as well to a prior verse 43 that ends with the phrase ". . . these were the first Foundations (*dhármāṇi*)." Here in this riddle hymn, this first reference to the "first *dhármans*" seems to enigmatize the preheated pot itself (Houben 2000, 523–25, 536).

29. Cf. Brereton 2004, 456: whereas verse 22c describes the mixing of milk with *soma*, "The rest of the verse is about the mixing of a different ingredient in *soma*'s creation, namely the recitation of the hymn. It is this thought of the seer which provides the foundation for *soma*."

30. Frits Staal's happy translation (e.g., 1989, 60). See also *BĀU* 4.2.2.

This concluding line or *pāda* of 1.164.43 is then repeated in the *pādas* that conclude verse 50 of the same hymn and the identical verse at 10.90.16. In brief, *ṚV* 10.90.16 appears to be an enigma built on an enigma.

Still, as we have seen, *dhárman* also has reference to more empirical "foundations." One can also track into verses on the "foundations" of King Soma themes and formulas that are "inherited" from the Ādityas, and above all from Varuṇa. This notion that deities "inherit" traits and descriptive formulae from other deities accounts for a recurrent feature of Vedic poetry (see Brereton 2004, 481). On these matters, Brereton's down-to-earth conclusions are illuminating. Taking up the "difficult question" of how *dharma* inherits the "command" "functions" of "the close connection between *vratá* and *dhárman*," while "the word *vratá* itself becomes circumscribed to a 'vow,'" he posits that it "may reflect the changing nature of the state during the Vedic period."[31] *Dhárman* would thus tie together the meaning of "royal and foundational authority" with "concreteness and legitimacy" to the meaning of "a physical foundation," pointing toward the "universal application" of the later *dharma*, while *vratá*, "resting on the personal authority of kings and sovereign gods," would basically be individualized. Thus "*dhárman* may have become the anchor to a broader claim by rulers." Brereton also discusses how the "semantic space" of early Vedic *ṛtá* (truth) is occupied by both *dhárma* and *satya* (real, true), with *dhárma* becoming linked more with sovereignty than *ṛta* was. "Thus a growing authority of the king may have made *dhárma* a seemingly more realistic description of the governing principle of the world" (2004, 484). As these points indicate, Olivelle's hypothesis that one may begin a "semantic history of *dharma*" with Varuṇa thus remains sound.

C. *Dhárman* and Ṛgvedic Kingship

Let us then continue to trace threads linking *dhárman* with kingship in the *Ṛgveda*, starting again with passages from *ṚV* Book 5. Brereton cites five verses from Book 5 hymns that speak of *dhárman* in connection with Varuṇa or Mitra. These two sovereign deities are often paired as the foremost among the early class of Ṛgvedic gods known as the Ādityas. Brereton puts considerable emphasis on Varuṇa's associations with the word *vratá*, which he has long argued (see Brereton 1981) should be translated primarily as "command" or "commandment" in its early usages, and Mitra's associations with the word *mitrá*, meaning first of all "contract." These associations, he says, make their "fundamental natures" (as one

31. As Greg Bailey points out, "This begs the question of a 'state.' By Witzel's views [see above] this meaning is very late" (personal communication, December 2006). I assume Brereton refers to usages from the late *Ṛgveda* on, as discussed.

meaning of *dhárman*) "transparent" in their names and "give color to the more neutral *dhárman*," so that "*dhárman* becomes 'the foundation of authority that structures society.' " This leads him to "an explanation, or at least another nuance," of *dhárman* as it relates to these two gods: "their 'foundation,' that is, their nature, is to represent" the "foundation of authority that structures society" (477). The poets can thus refer to both their "foundational authority that orders the worlds" and the "foundational nature" of the Ādityas themselves. Brereton suggests that these two sides of *dhárman* are present in the following verses:

> Herdsmen of the truth (*ṛ́tasya gopāv*), you two stand upon your chariot, o you whose Foundations are real (*sátyadharmāṇā*), in the furthest heaven (*paramé vyòmani*).
>
> In accordance with your Foundation (*dhármaṇā*), o Mitra and Varuṇa, who perceive inspired words, you two guard your commands through the craft of a lord (*vratā́ rakṣethe ásurasya māyáyā*). / In accordance with truth (*ṛténa*), you rule over the whole living world. You place the sun [Sūrya] here in heaven as your shimmering chariot. (*ṚV* 5.63.1ab, 6; Brereton trans. 2004, 477)
>
> By your command (*vraténa*), you two are those that give peaceful dwellings that endure, assigning places to the people according to your Foundation (*dhármaṇā*). (*ṚV* 5.72.2ab; Brereton trans. 2004, 478)

Taking up the two nuances just mentioned, Brereton notes that in 5.63.7, *dhármaṇā*, "in accordance with your Foundation," is set in parallel with *ṛténa*, "the truth that expresses the right organization of the world," and draws from this that *dhárman* could signify both the "foundation" according to which "Mitra and Varuṇa guard the commands which keep the world in order" and "the foundations of Mitra and Varuṇa as the embodiments of the authority to govern" (477). It may also be noted that, as the first and last verses of this hymn, 5.63.1 and 7 round out the hymn around images of truth, the real, poetic inspiration, the solar chariot, and the asuric lordship of the two gods. As to 5.72.2ab, just cited in connection with "peaceful settlements" (*kṣema*), Brereton notes that assigning such "places to the people" is more associated with Mitra; so together with *vratá*, the verse "again suggests that the *dhárman* according to which they act is both their foundation as well as the foundational authority they apply to the world" (478). We should note that the word that describes their divine lordship is *asura*, and that their "assigning places to the people according to your *dhárman*" makes no mention of kings of those people having any resultant or corresponding *dhárman*.

Let us also note that *ṚV* 5.69.1 describes Mitra and Varuṇa's "giving foundation" to multiple heavens:

> The three realms of light, Varuṇa, and the three heavens, the three airy spaces do you two give foundation [*dhṛ*], Mitra, / having grown strong, protecting the emblem of the ruler (*amátiṃ kṣatríyasya)*, in accordance with his unaging command (*vratám . . . ajuryám*).
> (Brereton trans. 2004, 488 n. 54)

Says Brereton, "Here Mitra, together with Varuṇa, 'gives foundation' [*dhṛ*] to the three realms of light and the other heavenly spaces"—this, however, in a verse using the root *dhṛ* but without the noun *dhárman*. As I shall note later in this section, Brereton usually notices this "foundations above" theme, but seems overall to underplay it. While "giving foundation" to the heavens, the pair also protects "the emblem of the ruler," which I take to be the sun as the emblem of their own heavenly rule (*kṣatriya* can mean "sovereign" in the *ṚV*), and not a standard of human rulers.

Beyond these Atri poems, *ṚV* 6.70.1–3, a hymn to Heaven and Earth, is interesting for two usages of *dhárman*. Verse 1 tells that "Heaven and Earth are buttressed apart according to the Foundation of Varuṇa (*dyā́vapṛthivī́ váruṇasya dhármaṇā vískabhite*)." Verse 3 reveals that it is "from the Foundation" (*dhármaṇas pári*) of these two worlds that humans propagate, thereby continuing to imply from verse 2 that the *dhárman* of Heaven and Earth, by which these primal parents "rule over this living world," is the fluids they circulate, among them "the semen . . . which was established in Manu" (trans. Brereton 2004, 481). According to Brereton, the mention of *vratá* in verses 2 and 3 means that "Heaven and Earth *inherit* the characteristic *dhárman* of Varuṇa, the authority that here ordains the continuation of the sacrificer's line" (481, my italics). Like Heaven and Earth, King Varuṇa presides over the circulation of waters that bring earthly abundance through good rains (Brereton 1982, 108–11, with several citations in Book 5). We note that in ruling by this "inherited" *dhárman*, Heaven and Earth continue a correlation between *dhárman* and kingship that has little if any direct relation to human kings.

Finally, I would like to note verse 7.82.2, from one of the Young Family Books, which, according to Dumézil, draws "a distinction which has the value of a theological definition" (1969 62 n. 18): Whereas Indra is *svarā́j*, "ruler of his own (domain),"[32] Varuṇa is *saṃrā́j*, "universal sovereign." While neither of these terms is used to link Indra or Varuṇa with *dhárman* in the Family

32. Thanks to Jarrod Whitaker (personal communication) for suggesting that I translate *svarā́j* in this fashion, drawing on Schlerath 1960, 132–35, rather than as "king by himself," which Dumézil prefers.

Books,[33] Brereton calls attention to *ṚV* 10.65.5 as a key verse for linking the universal kingship of Mitra and Varuṇa with *dhárman*:

> Strive for the sake of Mitra and of Varuṇa who acts dutifully, for them, the universal kings (*saṃrā́jā*) who, through their thought (*mánasā*), are not far away, / whose dominion (*dhā́man*) shines aloft according to their Foundation (*dhármaṇā*), for whom the two worlds are twin need and twin course. (Brereton trans. 2004, 478)

Brereton points toward interpreting *dhāman*, "dominion," here as being "the whole heavenly sphere over which Mitra and Varuṇa rule and to which they give foundation by their dutiful action as gods of alliance and commandment" (Ibid.). If, however, *dhárman* is linked with the universal kingship of Mitra and Varuṇa, it is never connected in the *Ṛgveda* with Indra's being *svarāj*. This suggests the possibility of three developmental stages.

First, although both terms are used in the early *ṚV* (for Indra as *svarāj*, see 3.45.5; for his rambunctious warrior bands, the Maruts, see 5.58.1; for Varuṇa as *saṃrāj*, see 5.85.1), neither *saṃrāj* (which is a bit curious) nor *svarāj* was felt to have any special rapport with *dhárman*. Second, verse 7.82.2, from the Young Family Books, would register an attempt to define a rapport between Varuṇa's and Indra's two types of divine kingship, but still without reference to *dhárman*. Then in the late *ṚV*, verse 10.65.5 would be a belated attempt to say that Mitra and Varuṇa's *saṃrāj* had been "foundational" all along. With this, now that Varuṇa's being *saṃrāj* is related to *dhárman* but not in any rapport with Indra, one may hazard the impression that Indra will not "inherit" whatever associations he may come to have with *dhárman* primarily from Varuṇa. So far, on the basis of what we find in the early *ṚV*, there appears to be no attempt to link *dhárman* with the "independent" and exuberant Indra, which may suggest that Indra was more the model of the earthly chieftain than Varuṇa, and like earthly "chiefs," yet to be reined in as a specific target of this concept.

In this context we may note one more verse from Book 7:

> Whatever this deceit that we humans practice against the race of gods, Varuṇa, / if by inattention we have erased your Foundations (*táva dhármā*), do not harm us because of that misdeed, o god. (*ṚV* 7.80.5; Brereton trans. 2004, 479)

Horsch gives a translation that could suggest that Varuṇa here would be the projection of a human king: "O Varuṇa, if we have violated *your laws* out of

33. Indra is also called *saṃrā́j* at 4.19.2: "the universal king whose origin is the truth" (*saṃrā́ṭ satyáyoniḥ*). See Sohnen 1997, 236.

ignorance, may you not bring us to harm on account of those sins, O god" (2004, 430 [my italics]). But reading *dhárman* in the plural as "laws" is at this point as "anachronistic" as reading it as "ordinances" in the even later verse 10.90.16 (see Brereton 2004, 467). There is no evidence in the early *ṚV* that human kings were considered "universal sovereigns" like Mitra and Varuṇa.

Now a good way to transition from the earlier to the later *ṚV* on this matter of the relation of *dhárman* to (primarily divine) kingship is to get our bearings from the beginning of Brereton's closing section on "*Dhárman* as the Foundation Created by a Sovereign Deity" (475–84), and the beginning of his concluding summary of that same section. In the first case, he begins: "The last sense in which *dhárman* is a 'foundation' is the most significant, for it is on this sense that much of the later development of *dhárman* and *dhárma* is established. A *dhárman* can be the 'foundation' through which a sovereign deity upholds the life of a community. This foundation can be the material basis for the community, or it can be prescribed behaviors and social relations which sustain the structure of the community. In the latter use, it is the sovereign's ruling 'authority' or 'institute'—and in these ways it may often be translated—upon which the life of a community depends." Brereton suggests that the latter usage applies solely to Varuṇa or Varuṇa together with the Ādityas, and the former solely to Soma, with whom one finds "some of the clearer instances of the link between *dhárman* and a ruler" in which the "foundation" that his "rule provides is likely the material foundation for the community" (2004, 475). It will suffice to cite two of the four verses on Soma that Brereton discusses in this connection:

> Under whose command (*vraté*) every people finds foundation (*víśvo . . . jano dādhā́ra*), under that of the lord of Foundation (*dhármaṇas páteḥ*), who is purifying himself, who brings the foremost good things. . . . (*ṚV* 9.35.6; Brereton trans. 2004, 475)
>
> The divine giver of drops, sweller of drops, (goes) forth. As the truth and for the truth (*ṛtám ṛtā́ya*), the very wise one purifies himself. / He will become the Foundation-giver (*dharmā́ bhuvad*), the king of what belongs to the community (*vṛjanyàsya rā́jā*). He has been brought forward toward the world by the ten reins. (*ṚV* 9.97.23; Brereton trans. 2004, 476)

In the first of these two verses, Brereton takes "every people" to imply community that "finds foundation"[34] under Soma as "lord of Foundation" in

34. According to Brereton, *dādhā́ra* is an "isolated use of the active perfect of √*dhṛ* as intransitive" (2004, 488 n. 49).

the material "good things" that Soma brings (475). In the second, Soma "is the king who is the Foundation-giver, for he governs what belongs to the community, that is, its wealth" (476). Brereton notes that the sense of *vṛjanyà* is uncertain since it only occurs here in the *ṚV*, but an earlier verse in the same hymn "provides an indication of its sense. Here Soma, as lord of the community, conquers the land and thereby gives the people the space to live":

> He strikes down the demon, and he presses away hostilities on every side—he who, as king of the community (*vṛjánasya rā́jā*), creates expanse (*várivaḥ kṛṇván*). (*ṚV* 9.97.10cd; Brereton trans. 2004, 476)

Says Brereton, "Soma's kingship is connected to his ability to give his people the means to raise and pasture their cattle," which are mentioned just before the main verse cited here. As has been discussed, some of the Soma hymns collected in Book 9 may be earlier than their place in the expanding *ṚV* collection process would reflect. However, whether these verses are early or not, while they make a correlation between King Soma's *dhárman* and the community of "every people" (perhaps referring just to every Ārya people), they make no such correlation explicitly with the kings or chieftains of such peoples. In Book 8, Agni is still called the "undeceivable king of the clans and overseer of the Foundations (*viśā́ṃ rā́jānam ádbhutam ádhyakṣaṃ dhármaṇām imám*)" (8.43.24; Brereton trans. 2004, 465).

This brings us to our second transition point from earlier to later *ṚV*: Brereton's concluding summary on the relation between *dhárman* and divine kings: "This sense of *dhárman* as 'foundational authority' is a critical source for the later development of the concept of *dhárma*, and in considering this aspect of *dhárman*, several points relevant to the history of *dhárman* and *dhárma* emerge. First, *dhárman* implies not just 'foundational authority' but 'royal authority.' This facet of its meaning is indicated either by the direct description of the gods that act in connection with *dhárman* as kings . . . or by attributing commanding authority to them" (2004, 482–83). For the first sense, he cites only one of six of his instances from the earliest *ṚV*, that of the asuric Mitra and Varuṇa in 5.63.7. And for the second, three of his six instances come from earlier portions: one where Mitra and Varuṇa assign peaceful enduring dwellings to the people (5.72.2); a second where Varuṇa buttresses apart Heaven and Earth (6.70.1–3); and one where men seek atonement for erasing the asura Varuṇa's foundations (7.89.5). The first two have been discussed, and none of them offer us anything further on the "sense of *dhárman*" as "royal authority" as "a critical source for the later development of the concept of *dhárma*."

That must come from the later *ṚV*, from which Brereton's remaining citations on these meanings derive. These include, in the first meaning, five verses

on "gods that act in connection with *dhárman* as kings": Soma (9.97.23), already described; Mitra and Varuṇa as universal kings (10.65.5), already described; Soma and Varuṇa (10.167.3); Soma ruling by the power of Mitra and Varuṇa's *dhárman* (9.107.15f.); and asuric Wind assisting Soma (1.134.5). For the second meaning, three verses attribute "commanding authority" to gods: Soma bringing goods (9.35.6), already cited; Soma as a bull (9.64.1); and Viṣṇu giving foundation by his three strides (1.22.18f.). Be it noted that Brereton does not mention *ṚV* 10.44.1, 10.90.16, or 8.52.3 in this tally, all of them important verses that need to be discussed as well in the context of changing definitions of the relation between *dhárman* and "royal authority." Since it will not be possible to range over all these verses, I will look at the three just mentioned from the vantage point of Brereton's discussion of them and the other later *ṚV* passages just mentioned.

Clearly Indra has emerged for us already as a problem for the future history of *dharma*. *ṚV* 10.44 is mainly about him:

> As the lord of his own (*svápatir*), let Indra journey here for his invigoration (*mádāya*)—he, the vibrant, who thrusts forward according to his nature (/'Foundation') (*dhármaṇā*), / who energetically dominates over all strengths according to his boundless and great bull-likeness.
>
> Let good things go among us, for I hope for them. Journey here to the *soma*-bearer's stake, which carries his good expectation. / You [Indra] are master (*tvám īśiṣe*). Take your seat here on this sacred grass. Vessels which belong to you are not to be claimed (by another) according to your [nature/character] Foundation (*dhármaṇā*). (*RV* 10.44.1 and 5; Brereton trans. 2004, 472; brackets added as per discussion below)

Brereton probably does not mention these verses in his closing section on "*Dhárman* as the Foundation Created by a Sovereign Deity" (475–84) because Indra gets his invigoration by Soma and the verses do not call him a king. Nonetheless, verse 5 invites Indra, "You are master (*tvám īśiṣe*)," to sit at the *soma* sacrifice and to receive vessels that are solely his "according to his *dhárman* (nature, foundation)," on which Brereton says, "It would be reasonable, then, if the *dhárman* is that principle according to which the *soma* cups belong to Indra and to Indra alone in his foundational nature, his very character as Indra. Alternately, these vessels may be Indra's according to *their* foundation, that is, according to their place in the ritual." Moreover, it is by Indra's own bull-like *dhárman* that he dominates and masters, which we already know he

does as one who is "king of his own (domain)" or *svarāj*. Brereton notes that Renou and Geldner translate *dhárman* frequently (and more often than he) by its meaning "foundational nature," and he agrees that this passage is one that confirms such a meaning. It is thus about Indra as "the lord of his own (domain)" (*svápatir*), and "twice speaks of the 'foundation of Indra,' the character that defines his action." But let us note that although Brereton finds a parallelism in which *dhárman* and "bull-likeness" both pertain to Indra and "define who and what he is" (472), there is no such parallelism between *dhármaṇā*, the foundational "nature" by which Indra is vibrant, and his being *svápati*, "lord of his own (domain)."[35] That is, if it is his bull-like "nature"—his machismo—that makes him powerful, that enables him to be *svápati*, his "own-nature" could not be taken exactly as his *sva-dharman*, since his invigoration comes from, that is, has its foundation in, the ritual, the laud, *soma*, etc.[36]

In any case, it would seem that *ṚV* 10.44.1 and 5 deserve mention along with other verses that are concerned with bringing Indra, however indirectly, into the sphere connecting *dhárman* with kingship. Brereton does mention 10.167.3 as among the late verses making such a link, but primarily in connection with Soma and Varuṇa:

> Upon the Foundation (*dhármaṇi*) of king Soma and Varuṇa, and under the protection of Bṛhaspati and Anumati, / today, at your praise, o generous one (Indra), I consumed vats (of *soma*), o you that set in place and that set apart (*dhā́tar vídhātaḥ*). (*ṚV* 10.167.3; Brereton trans. 2004, 478)

Noting that it is rare to see Soma and Varuṇa mentioned together, Brereton says that their "designation as kings implies that the *dhárman* of Soma and Varuṇa is their royal authority. And perhaps, their appearance together reflects the complementary sides of their *dhárman*: Soma establishes material foundation, Varuṇa social foundation" (2004, 479). Here it is interesting that it is upon the foundation of Kings Soma and Varuṇa that the *soma*-drinking ritualist praises Indra as Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ, nicely translated as "you that set in place and that set apart"! These two names are used together only one other time in the *ṚV*: for the "All-Maker" Viśvakarman at 10.82.2. And where they are used singly, they occur mostly in the late books (19 of 21 times for *dhātṛ*; 4 of 6 times for *vidhātṛ*). This, however, is the only verse in the *ṚV* that connects "setting in place and setting apart" with *dhárman*. It could prove significant that

35. Or "his own master" (Dumézil 1969, 62 n. 18). Dumézil notes that two of the *ṚV*s three usages of *svápati* pertain to Indra (1969, 62 n. 18).

36. The only occurrence of *svadharman* in the *ṚV* (see above n. 3), at 3.21.2b, would seem to ask that Agni from "his own foundation"—no doubt the ritual fire—bestow (√*dhā*) what is best "for us" that is acceptable to the gods.

it makes such a connection with regard to a continually active god like Indra, who probably "inherits" this tag from Viśvakarman, who "sets in place and sets apart" only in his primal cosmogonic work as the divine architect of the universe. As we shall see in later chapters, in the *Mahābhārata* the terms *dhātṛ* and *vidhātṛ* take on a life of their own in association with *dharma*—and often enough in relating *dharma* with *bhakti*.[37]

This brings us the *Puruṣasūkta*, which, as Bailey (1983a, 142) has noted, uses the verb *vi-dhā* to describe how the gods divided (*vyadadhuḥ*) Puruṣa, the cosmic "Male," when "they created the physical features of the cosmos and the four *varṇas* from the parts of his body" (*ṚV* 10.90.11–14). It is just after this "division" or "setting apart" of this victim's portions that the hymn speaks of plural *dhármans* in its last verse (16).[38] It can be noticed that verses mentioning *dhárman* usually occur early in a hymn, often as the very first stanza. This occurs thirteen times, and in two of these cases, both from the earlier *ṚV*, *dhárman* is mentioned in the first and last verses only: in 3.17.1 and 5, discussed in the last section, and in 5.63.1 and 7, already cited in this section.[39] I would suggest that this is because *dhárman* can itself signal both a poetic "foundation" for what a hymn says, and something that is to be (or has been) unfolded or unravelled in the hymn. This applies also to four cases where *dhárman* is mentioned only in a hymn's last verse, as in the *Puruṣasūkta*,[40] where its placement would not be accidental. As noted earlier, the same exact verse also occurs as the fifty-second of fifty-four in the much more rambling *ṚV* 1.164 (the riddle-laced *Asya vāmasya* hymn), from which 10.90 perhaps lifts it into its much more memorably structured slot.[41] The Puruṣa hymn's earlier verses can thus be reviewed from the standpoint of the "foundations" proclaimed at its end:

37. See chapter 12. Cf. Halbfass 1988, 317–18, 550–51 n. 35, on other cases of "holding apart": *ṚV* 2.13.7; *BĀU* 3.8.9 (rather than 2.8.9, as listed). This usage comes in the second of two dialogues in which the bold young (?) woman Gārgī Vācaknavī finds the right way to get a productive answer from Yājñavalkya after her first questions about what is woven upon what have misfired (*BĀU* 3.6); now she comes back to ask him, "The things above the sky, the things below the earth, and the things between the earth and the sky, as well as all those things people here refer to as past, present, and future—on what, Yājñavalkya, are all these woven back and forth?" (3.8.7)—which, it seems, obliges him to finally answer, "the imperishable." See Hiltebeitel and Kloetzli 2004, 558 for an interpretation of the two Gārgī passages in sequence. Halbfass notes that this meaning is not forgotten in the *Mbh*; see 12.110.11: "the creatures are kept apart, i.e., upheld in their respective identities, by *dharma* (*dharmeṇa vidhṛtāḥ prajāḥ*)—in these cases with √*dhṛ* rather than √*dhā*." Cf. also Halbfass 1992, 54 on analogous Abhidharma explanations using *dhātu* and *dharma*.

38. The *Puruṣasūkta*'s uses as a single and whole Ṛgvedic hymn are unusual in later classical Hinduism (Biardeau 1976, 14–16 and *passim*; 1991), and must have begun early, to judge from its inclusion in the other three Vedic Saṃhitās (Witzel 1997*a*, 283–84).

39. The other eleven that mention *dhárman* in the first verse are 1.160, 1.187, 3.3, 3.17, 5.63, 6.70, 8.98, 9.7, 9.64, 10.44, and 10.88.

40. The other three instances are 7.89.5, 9.35.6, and 10.175.4. The total of seventeen verses occurring in the first or last verse is precisely one fourth of the total of verses mentioning *dhárman* (counting *svádharman* in 3.21.2).

41. See Bloomfield 1916, 151, considering it secondary in 10.90; Houben 2000, 524–25 and n. 127 in apparent agreement; Horsch 2004, 444 n. 20.

> With the sacrifice the gods sacrificed the sacrifice (*yajñéna yajñám ayajanta devā́s*): these were the first Foundations (*tā́ni dhármāṇi prathamā́ni āsan*), / and those, its greatnesses, follow to heaven's vault, where exist the ancient ones who are to be attained, the gods. (*RV* 10.90.16; Brereton trans. 2004, 460)

Brereton takes this verse as emblematic of the poets' concern that *dhárman* be a ritual foundation not only for heaven and earth and the gods but "that the ritual itself have a foundation" (2004, 459–60). Thus, "[t]he 'first *dhármans*' are the model sacrifice instituted by the gods and replicated in human performance, and as such, they are the 'foundations' for the ritual performance" (460)—itself described in the paradoxical first line that uses three derivatives of √*yaj* to suggest that Puruṣa is both the sacrificial victim and the means by which the sacrificial process of the gods who sacrificed him is set in motion (although Brereton says it might also just mean that the gods "sacrificed again and again"; Ibid.; cf. Horsch 2004, 428).[42] Brereton's translation "foundations" is especially lucid here, and preferable, as noted, to "ordinances," "laws," or "institutes"; for as he says, in the *ṚV* "the ritual was varied and fluid" (467). Yet the hymn also reflects a period when it is getting less so. According to Witzel, this late hymn provides "the first constitution of India" for the emerging Kuru state that combined the completion of the *ṚV Saṃhitā* with the early collection of the other three Vedas during the post-*ṚV* "mantra period." For among the "first foundations" that the hymn solidifies is "the 'official' establishment of the four classes (*varṇa*)" of Brahmin or priest from Puruṣa's mouth, Rājanya or nobility from his arms, Vaiśya or people from his thighs, and Śūdra or servant from his feet (verse 12). It thus comes to serve as a charter for "increasing social stratification," with cooperation between the armed nobility and a newly minted class of Brahmins that now cuts across and unifies the older clans of poet-priests; the "joint power" of these two classes over the Vaiśya; and further internal *varṇa* division between *Ārya* and Śūdra (1997*a*, 1997*b*, 267). *ṚV* 10.90 says nothing direct that would either ground kingship itself in the "first Foundations," or the "first *dhármans*" in kingship. It just mentions the nobility as a class from which kings would presumably come, and shows its subordination to the Brahmin class not only by its second position but also by saying in verse 13 that Indra and Agni come from the mouth of Puruṣa just after the Brahmin came from Puruṣa's mouth in verse 12.[43] This priority might suggest that even if Indra and possibly Agni participate as

42. Brereton's translation of *sādhyas* as modifying the gods who are "to be attained" may eliminate another mystery of a class of Sādhya gods prior to the gods.

43. One wants to say the *same* mouth, but Puruṣa has a thousand heads. . . .

divine kings (which is not clear) in implementing the sacrificial "first Foundations," they would do so on the precedent of the sacred speech that the prior birth of the Brahmin makes possible, and Indra in particular would do so by association with the purifying ritual Fire. There is nothing in the hymn about Varuṇa or the "universal sovereignty" (*saṃrāj*) that links him and Mitra with *dhárman* in *ṚV* 10.65.5. But the elliptical verse 5 says that "Virāj was born from him (Puruṣa), and Puruṣa from Virāj." As the feminine principle of this primal pair, *virāj*, meaning "Wide Dominion," may "inherit" the status of Earth as the foundation (*dhárman*), along with Heaven, of progeny, which, we may recall, comes about after Heaven and Earth are "buttressed apart by the foundation (*dhárman*) of Varuṇa" in *ṚV* 6.70.1–3.

Finally, if, with its sixteenth verse, *ṚV* 10.90 opens a new chapter in the history of *dharma*, the one stanza to mention *dhárman* in the still later and the apocryphal Vālakhilya hymns may discretely open yet another one:

> He (= Indra) who made the solemn words his own, who boldly drank the *soma*, / for whom Viṣṇu strode forth his three steps, according to the Foundations of Mitra (*mitrásya dhármabhiḥ*). (*ṚV* 8.52.3; Brereton trans. 2004, 480)

The hymn celebrates Indra as having drunk the *soma* with Manu (1a) and as the beneficiary of Viṣṇu's three steps, mentioning that Viṣṇu was acting in accord "with the Foundations of Mitra." It further grants Indra the status of "fourth Āditya" (*turīyāditya* 7c)—presumably numbering him after Mitra, Varuṇa, and Aryaman and no doubt imparting a joint sovereign status to him along with the other three (Brereton 1982, 5) by this association with Mitra. The meaning of *dhárman* as "foundations" is again well clarified by Brereton, who explains the "Foundations of Mitra" in relation to this god's being the god "contract" (*mitrá*) linked with "alliances," "which refer here to the alliance between Indra and Viṣṇu which is the basis of Viṣṇu's three strides" (480). Yet I believe Brereton misses two things here: one, in taking Mitra's "foundations" as the basis for Viṣṇu's three steps rather than just the basis for his alliance with Indra; and another in taking the three strides themselves as an "image of ascent," and thus as "one basis for the occurrence of *dhárman* here, since it implies the need for a foundation for that ascent," even if this is meant "only figuratively" since the "the real foundation of Viṣṇu's ascent is his relationship with Indra" (480). It is not so evident that Viṣṇu's three strides are an ascent or that they need "foundation." And it would be more exact to say of Mitra's "foundations," which are in any case in the plural, that, rather than being the "foundation" for the three strides themselves, they are the basis simply of Viṣṇu's contract with

Indra—or his "friendship" with him,[44] this being another and no doubt secondary meaning of *mitrá* (Brereton 1982, 15–21, 44–49) but the one where the relationship between Indra and Viṣṇu has, as will now be noted, already been heading. Fortunately, all this becomes clearer from such earlier hymns as *ṚV* 4.18.11d (= 8.100.12a), where Indra asks his "friend Viṣṇu" (*sákhe viṣṇo*) to "stride widely" to open the spaces for the defeat of the demon Vṛtra, and 1.22.18–19ab which shows that Viṣṇu's three strides do not require a foundation at all, and especially from here below:

> Three steps he strode out: he, Viṣṇu, the undeceivable cowherd, / who gives foundation (*dhṛ*) to the foundations from there (*áto dhármāṇi dhāráyan*) // see the deeds of Viṣṇu!—from where he watches over his commands (*vratā́ni*). (*ṚV* 1.22.18–19ab; Brereton trans. 2004, 480, slightly modified)

Following Brereton, if "Viṣṇu's *vratā́ni*, his 'commands,' set this verse within the context of royal authority and again of Varuṇa" (480), the connection of Viṣṇu's three steps with *dhárman* is again made with one of the two primary Ādityas, in this case Varuṇa rather than Mitra. Yet although Brereton recognizes that the "'there' from which Viṣṇu 'gives foundation' is probably heaven," he remains caught up with the idea that this is "another passage concerning Viṣṇu" where "the sense of foundational authority" appears with "the imagery of . . . physical foundation." This misses the point that heaven is not exactly a physical foundation. As Horsch says of this verse, "from the uppermost point, from the zenith, the ridge of the world-structure, Viṣṇu holds firmly the *dhármāṇi*, the fundamental supports, which bestow support and stability on all the parts of the universe . . . as though the cosmos had been turned upside down," calling attention to the inverted tree and other Ṛgvedic and later images of cosmic inversion (2004, 427–28 and 443 n. 16). Again, Brereton keeps things down to earth when he says, "In vs. 18, the scene shifts explicitly to heaven, which is the limit of Viṣṇu's journey." True, the prior verse 17 tells that "Viṣṇu strode out—three times he set down his track—through this (world) here, / which is drawn together in his dusty (track)" (Brereton trans. 2004, 480). But verse 18, with its shift to heaven, still makes heaven the place from which Viṣṇu "gives foundation to the foundations" for the three steps that open up the world for the kingship not of Varuṇa but of his "friend Indra," with whom the apocryphal verse 8.52.3 tells us that he "contracts" through the

44. Cf. Geldner 1951, vol. 2, 374, who has ". . . für den Viṣṇu die drei Schritte ausschritt nach den Pflichten des Freundes" (". . . for whom Viṣṇu strode out the three steps according to the duties of the friend") rather than ". . . according to the foundations of Mitra" for the end of 8.52.3.

"foundations of Mitra." All this suggests that Viṣṇu's links with Indra through *dhárman* have to do with Mitra and *mitrá* through the related "friendship" term *sákhya*, which defines Viṣṇu's coming to the aid of Indra with his three steps to open the space so that Indra, invigorated with Soma, can defeat Vṛtra.

Brereton seems to skip over Viṣṇu, as if he were an unwelcome problem, perhaps to stick as much as possible with a "Varuṇa context." But something more is already going on with Viṣṇu. The terms *mitrá*, *sákhya*, and other words for friendship and alliance open a new semantic arena in which the epics will work out further implications of *dharma* where Viṣṇu's incarnations or *avatāras* concern themselves with matters of alliance, friendship, enmity, self, other, *ārya* and *non-ārya*, and the theme of hospitality which, among other things, will play a role in the formation of *bhakti*, which builds on the Vedic theme of honoring a divine guest (see chapter 12). For now, however, we are also faced with questions: What could it mean to "give foundation to the foundations?" Or to "give foundation" or "support" from above? Horsch says the latter idea "seems absurd to us" and attributes it to "mythical thinking" (2004, 428). I think, however, that these are among the persistent and well-nurtured enigmas of Ṛgvedic *dhárman*.

D. Mantra Period and Later *Saṃhitā* Usages

Moving on into post-Ṛgvedic understandings of *dharma*, one must posit a temporal gap (Witzel 1997*a*, 267) between the *ṚV* poems and subsequent "mantra period" texts in which Ṛgvedic mantras, along with new mantras composed in both poetry and prose, were sorted out for expanding liturgical purposes. As Frits Staal puts it, "The Rigveda was created by poets, the other three by what we would call professors" (2010). These developments were signaled in the *Puruṣasūkta*, whose "'official' establishment of the four classes (*varṇa*) . . . is visible in all Mantra texts" (Witzel 1997*a*, 267; cf. 274–75). Among its "first Foundations," this hymn chartered not only a new class consciousness of the mouth-born Brahmins but the contents of the three liturgical Vedas, which, according to its ninth verse, were generated from Puruṣa as well.

In the area of (in modern terms) "the eastern Panjab/Haryana area," a complex liturgical system was developed in support of "Kuru dominance and orthopraxy in the Mantra period" (Ibid., 278–79, 313). The earliest mantra period productions consisted in the systematic application of mainly Ṛgvedic mantras to ritual uses via the collection of two more "liturgical" Vedas, the *Yajur-* and *Sāma Vedas*. A fourth Veda, the *Atharva Veda*, more concerned with custom, introduced many new mantras as healing and sorcery charms and for domestic and some royal rites. With these texts, we enter into what may be called Brahmanical Hinduism, which we will trace

further in chapter 5. Each Veda produced specialists whose schools proliferated into "branches" that could bring Brahmanical ritual into new regions wherever branches of the three liturgical Vedas could cooperate. This system sets the grounds for what has been described as Brahmanical "orthopraxy" or "right practice." The ritual theologians of the four Vedic schools then continue to lay out the performance and meanings of Vedic sacrifice in prose manuals called Brāhmaṇas. The last Vedic texts to generate innovative, though not numerous, usages of *dharma* are then the early Upaniṣads, which round out the Vedic canon.

For the preclassical history of *dharma*, this middle-to-late Vedic period, coming between the innovative uses of *dhárman* in the *ṚV* and the sudden burst of interest in *dharma* in early Buddhism and in both Buddhism and Brahmanism during the Mauryan period, is surprisingly fallow. What needs to be noticed is that, aside from a few scattered uses of *dhárman* or *dharma* implying custom and rudimentary legal procedure in royal courts, there is *cumulative* usage in only two spheres: one, that of the king, where we can see continued development of Ṛgvedic themes; the other, a new strain concentrating on assertions of Brahmin privilege.

Of post-Ṛgvedic texts, the *Atharva Veda* [*AV*] is the earliest to introduce some distinctive emphases in the area of custom. Being less tied to the *ṚV* than the liturgical *Sāma-* and *Yajur Vedas* in its hymn-content and to direct use in the developing *śrauta* ritual, the *AV* is informative in suggesting popular usages[45] that reflect the developing ritual systematization only obliquely. But its noteworthy decline in usages from sixty-seven in the *ṚV* to thirteen allows Olivelle to introduce his point that, contrary to what one might expect, "*dharma* was at best a marginal term and concept within the vocabulary" of middle and late Vedic texts (2004*a*, 491). Most revealing is *AV* 12.1.45, which calls upon the earth that "bears people in many places, each according to its fixed domicile, with different languages and various laws (*nā́nādharmāṇam*)" (Horsch 2004, 432). Although Horsch's translation "laws" is not very secure, we are for the first time in an interesting pluralistic situation where, beside varied modes of residence and speech, varied *dharmas* as "customs"[46] might be at least a harbinger of a "legal" meaning. The same would apply where "law" or "custom" is cited in marriage, with "You are the wife by virtue of *dhárman*" (14.1.51), and where "a wife is said to lie beside her dead husband "following an ancient law (or custom) (*dhármaṃ purāṇám*)" (18.3.1c; Bowles 2007, 88). One might even detect a recurring theme of *dharma* now being articulated in relation to women and the earth. A magical love charm can still kindle intense burning in a man "according to the foundation of Varuṇa"

45. "Because of its focus on small non-Śrauta rituals, the AV is an irreplaceable source for the material culture, the customs and beliefs, the desires and sorrows of everyday Vedic life" (Witzel 1997*a*, 275).

46. Bowles 2007, 87 translates this plural of *dharma* as "varied . . . custom."

(*váruṇasya dhármaṇā*; 6.132).[47] We are seeing here usages of both *dhárman* and *dharma*. This departure from the uniform use of *dhárman* in the *ṚV* was remarked on by Horsch (2004, 432, 442), whose main point[48] is summarized by Bowles: "Horsch suggests a semantic reason: while the suffix *-man* [of *dhárman*] emphasizes the activity of the meaning of the root, the abstract *-a* ending [of *dharma*] accords with the generalized abstract sense of the word as 'law'" (2007, 88)—or, by the same token, "custom." Horsch thus sees the *Atharva Veda* at the heart of a change to the more abstract noun *dharma*, as in the usage of *dharma purāṇa*, the "ancient law" just cited in connection with a funerary practice.

Next oldest is the *Yajur Veda*, the work of Adhvaryu priests who, with their responsibility of coordinating the use of *mantras* as *yajus* or "sacrificial formulas," did the most to systematize the *śrauta* ritual. Their four extant *Yajurveda Collections* reflect developments in successive political centers across northern India, each further to the east,[49] and thus bring us back readily to the subject of the king. Four of their collections are extant: the *Kāṭhaka*, *Maitrāyaṇī*, and *Taittirīya Saṃhitās*, all of the older so-called Black Yajurveda in which *mantra* and commentary are mixed, and the younger *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā* in which *mantra* and commentary are separated. First, the *Kāṭhaka* and *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitās* were composed in the Kurukṣetra area, ca. 1180 to at least 900 BCE, when the Kuru realm was still at its height in the eastern Punjab/Haryana area, but now expanding both east and south and beginning to form an alliance with "the other half of the 'classical' Vedic tribal moiety, namely the Pañcāla" (Witzel 1997*a*, 301). In these first two *Yajurveda saṃhitā*s, the ritual is designed for "the 'average' *yajamāna*" (patron of a sacrifice) as a nobleman, but with attention also to small chieftains and to the Kuru king, "whose aims are clearly visible in the development of a ritual for royal consecration, the Rājasūya, which is an elaboration of the simple *abhiṣeka* of the Mantra period" (299–300). In the *Taittirīya*, however, which begins a frequent use of the compound *kurupañcāla* in coordination with the rise of independent Pañcāla kings by about 750 BCE, one can detect a relocation of the center of orthopraxy eastward toward the Pañcāla lands—the Gaṅgā-Yamunā *doāb* ("two river area" or "mesopotamia") and surrounding regions of today's western Uttar Pradesh (301). Here one meets the emergence to prominence of Pañcāla chiefs,[50] new population movements

47. Bowles 2007, 87, but following Brereton's translation of this phrase in its *ṚV* usages.

48. Horsch ties this change to a transformation from the "cosmic-ritual level" to the "juridical–ethical realm" (2004, 432, 442). I agree with Brereton (2004, 485) that Horsch's overall evolutionary scheme is outdated and that these terms are not useful to describe the *ṚV*.

49. See especially Witzel 1989*a*, 236–49, with maps and charts.

50. According to Witzel 1997*a*, 302 n. 218, their emergence explains the question asked of Yājñavalkya about the descendants of the great Kuru King Parikṣit in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.3, "Where are the Pārikṣitas?"—to which the sage replies, "Indra handed the Pārikṣitas to the wind," which "carried them to the place where those who had offered horse sacrifices go" (Olivelle trans. 1998, 83).

along the rivers and into the interior (but still no indication of large towns or cities), and *Taittirīya* subschools extending further east—possibly in relation to political divisions among the Pañcālas themselves—to the border of the emerging territories of the Kosalas. There, beginning perhaps from ca. 600 BCE, the *Vājasaneyī* project was probably launched among the Kosalas of today's eastern Uttar Pradesh, with their kings known as Ikṣvākus, and favored also by the Videhas, their neighbors to the east in today's Bihar. These are all names we shall meet again. By about 500 BCE, these developments would have coincided with the early phases of India's second (after the Indus Valley Civilization) urbanization.

Now where *dharma* is concerned, the *Yajurveda Saṃhitā*s either illustrate ways in which older Vedic *mantras* are applied to specific ritual uses, or offer a relatively small number of new explications of *dharma* in prose.[51] In these new usages, one finds three noteworthy developments. First, one meets a new recurrent phrase, *dhruvéṇa dhármaṇā* ("with firm/enduring *dhárman*"). Olivelle calls attention to a *Maitrayaṇī Saṃhitā* passage that offers a rich gloss on the phrase:

> Mitra and Varuṇa in accordance with their enduring *dharma*. Mitra, indeed, holds it fast (*dādhā́ra*), and Varuṇa establishes it (*kalpayati*). For the upholding (*vídhṛtyai*)[52] of these creatures and for their establishment (*kḷptyai*), it is set up. Mitra and Varuṇa are clearly the ones who uphold *dharma* among the gods (*devā́nāṃ dhármadhā́rayau*). They have upheld here the divine *dharma* (*daivám . . . dhármam adīdharatām*). (Olivelle trans. 2004*a*, 492; *MS* 3.8.9)

Olivelle notes "that the explanation clearly connects *dharma* with" √*dhṛ*, and that such a connection is also evident in *Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā* 35.7, the first half of which is from *ṚV* 10.173.4 and the second half found only in this passage (Olivelle 2004*a*, 508 n. 5):

> The sky is enduring (*dhruvā*); the earth is enduring; this whole universe is enduring. The gods are enduring through *dharma*, and the sacrificer (*yajamāna*) is enduring through the sacrificial animals. (Olivelle trans. 2004*a*, 492, slightly modified)

There is an interesting juxtaposition here in that the gods (plural) are to the sacrificer (single) as *dharma* (single) is to the sacrificial animals (plural) by whose sacrifice, understood as *dharma*, not only would the sacrificer endure but the gods as well. Such a singular centrality of the sacrificer and dharma

51. Without, according to Olivelle, any noticeable "semantic difference" between *dhárman* and *dharma* (2004, 491). But that would be a matter of degree.

52. Or possibly "the holding apart."

comes out as well in usage where the phrase *dhruvéṇa dhármaṇā* is applied to the planting of the sacrificial post (*yūpa*) "in accord with the enduring *dhárman* of Mitra and Varuṇa."[53] Here, where it is a question of associating *dhárman* with a sacrificial post or pillar that is itself an image the (implicitly royal?) sacrificer as the measure of the cosmic axis,[54] it remains fruitful to see in *dhárman* the Ṛgvedic nuance of "foundation." A nonsacrificial instance of posts being associated with royal *dharma* is found in Aśoka's *dhaṃma-ṭhambas* or "*dhaṃma* pillars."

Another development, which can be traced from usages in the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* to ones in the *Taittirīya*, involves new articulations of rapports between the king and *dharma*. According to *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* 2.6.8; 4.4.2, Soma, Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra, and Agni—gods who are all connected with *dhárman* in the *ṚV*—are also invoked as "upholders of *dharma*" (*dharmadhṛ́tas*) to make the new king an upholder of *dharma* (Olivelle 2004*a*, 493). *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 1.8.16.2 uses a Ṛgvedic epithet of Varuṇa to identify the king explicitly with him: "You are Varuṇa, whose *dharma* is true/real (*váruṇo 'si satyadhármā*)" (Idem). Such articulations are also found in the systematization of the two great royal rituals, the Rājasūya and the horse sacrifice or Aśvamedha.

In the Rājasūya, according to both *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* 2.6.6 and *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 1.8.10.1–2, after Mitra is invoked as "lord of truth" (*satya*) and Varuṇa as "lord of *dharma*" (*dharmapati*), it is announced, "This is your king, Bhāratas"[55]—on which *Āpastamba Śrautasūtra* will make the comment that by "Bhāratas," one means "respectively Kurus, Pañcālas, Kuru-Pañcālas, or simply people" (Heesterman 1957. 70). This "vedic" identification of a people as "Bhāratas" at their king's consecration has, of course, a big future. First, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* will give a hint of a story about a king Bharata Dauḥṣanti who performed an Aśvamedha and had a mother named Śakuntalā who was an Apsaras (13.5.4.11–14).[56] Then the *Mahābhārata* will foreground its story of the birth of Bharata from King Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā as its first *upākhyāna* or subtale. The Poona Critical Edition establishes that in the *Mahābhārata*'s baseline archetypal text, the epic's first two *upākhyānas* or substories are those of Śakuntalā, mother of Bharata, and of Yayāti, father of Pūru, both of which have as their background the epic's account of the *Aṃśāvataraṇa*: the "descent of the partial incarnations" of gods into human lineages to relieve the burden

53. *TS* 1.3.1.2; *MS* 1.2.11; *VS* 5.27; Olivelle 2004*a*, 492.

54. For *dharma* and sacrificial posts, see Biardeau 2004, 99 and *passim*. Horsch 2004, 446–47 n. 68 observes: "it cannot be surprising that there was an actual Dharma cult during the medieval era . . . in Bengal," which, though he does not mention it, makes use of planks cut to the outlines of a stylized *yūpa*, some with upraised nails for impalement. See Hiltebeitel 1991, 199 Figure 13 and *passim*. See chapter 9 § D.

55. Olivelle 2004*a*, 493. Cf. Olivelle 2004*a*, 508 n. 8.

56. See Biardeau 1979, 117–19; Thapar (1999) 2002, 10–11; Brodbeck 2009*a*, 57 n. 47.

of the earth.[57] Whereas the critical edition, following the Northern Recension in this regard, has the Śakuntalā story, with the birth of Bharata, first, the Southern Recension reverses that order and puts the Yayāti story, with the birth of Pūru, first (see Sukthankar 1933, 282). This reversal by the Southern Recension is likely to be the result of its handlers' interest in advancing the epic's own genre identification as *itihāsa*, "history" (see Hiltebeitel 2010*b*; forthcoming-*a*, chapter 4; forthcoming-*d*), since, as the Śakuntalā story itself makes clear repeatedly, Duṣyanta and Bharata are "Pauravas," "descendants of Pūru." But if the Southern Recension reverses the sequence of the "Vedic" past to make it more linear, the archetypal Mahā-"Bhārata" would also have had an interest in anchoring its *itihāsa* in a refashioned Vedic "Bharata story" that unifies a *Vedic people and a Vedic land*. Just as the *Mahābhārata* serializes the Ṛgvedic names Pūru, Bharata, and Kuru, the inaugural announcement found in the two Yajurveda *Saṃhitās* would presumably have reflected the preeminence of a Kuru king in the *Maitrāyaṇī* and his precedence for the Kuru-Pañcālas in the *Taittirīya*, while harking back to the younger family books of the *ṚV* to connect *dharma* with this prototypical royal name.[58]

As to the Aśvamedha, Bowles (2007, 93 n. 47) cites the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* version of a formula that equates the king with *dharma*: "with my two shins and my two feet I am *dharma* (*dhármo 'smi*), the king fixed firmly on his people."[59] And Olivelle cites a formula found in all three Black *Yajurveda Saṃhitās* that connects *dharma* with the reins of the king's chariot (2004*a*, 493). One may observe that the king's association with *dharma* differs in the Rājasūya and the Aśvamedha. In the Rājasūya, he is consecrated mainly in the name of Varuṇa to lawful and truthful rule; in the Aśvamedha to these more martial and even subduing formulas that connect him with *dharma* only as a kind of law unto himself, without mentioning Varuṇa or for that matter any deity. Although the earliest *ṚV* knows some form of Aśvamedha,[60] its promotion in the *Yajurveda Saṃhitās*, according to Witzel, "forms the final, culminating point in the development of the *śrauta* ritual"—especially in the White Yajurveda and other texts developed in the final third center of Vedic canonization in Kosala and Videha (1997*a*, 301; 313).

57. See Brodbeck 2009, 28, pointing out that the Yayāti story, including the *Uttarayāyata*, comprises eighteen *adhyāyas*: a signature number of the *Mahābhārata* that, within it, can signify a kind of epic epitome (see Hiltebeitel 2006*a*, 231; 2009*a*, 170).

58. Cf. Brodbeck 2009, 67 on the "prefatorial" treatment of the Śakuntalā story and its "patrilineal import."

59. *Jáṅghābhyāṃ padbhyā́ṃ dhármo 'smi viśí rā́jā prátiṣṭitaḥ*; see P.-E. Dumont 1948. Bowles indicates that the formula seems to have been changed from an older version at *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* 3.11.8 that "has *dhī́ro* for *dhármo* which suggests a little of the older sense"— that is, the king would say "I am firm" rather than "I am *dharma*."

60. See Witzel 1997*a*, 313 n. 28: "Found already in ṚV 1.162–63; apparently even earlier at 4.38–42, 4.42.8."

Finally, apparently reflecting post-*Taittirīya Saṃhitā* new conceptions in both the second and third centers, *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 3.4.1 and *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā* 30.6.10 use *dharma* in a context that Olivelle and Bowles interpret as suggesting an early association with litigation. In the Puruṣamedha or human sacrifice, which may be only a theoretical construct working out implications of the *Puruṣasūkta*, but in which people are in any case dedicated to various deities, it is prescribed that a *sabhāga* be sacrificed to *dharma* and a deaf man to *adharma*. Olivelle takes the *sabhāga* to be "presumably, a man who participates at the royal audience hall [*sabhā*] where judicial proceedings are carried out," and the deaf man as one excluded from such debates (2004*a*, 493–94). Bowles similarly takes the *sabhāga* to be "a member of the judicial administration" (2007, 90 n. 34). It would seem that three novelties have converged here: the earliest suggestion that *dharma* is connected with judicial procedure in a royal assembly hall; the first mention of *adharma*;[61] and the first reference to *Dharma*, not to mention *Adharma*, as a deity who receives sacrifice. Needless to say, real or as a simulacrum, the sacrifice of a deaf man and "a member of the judicial administration" is a pretty rough idea of justice.

E. The Brāhmaṇas

Brāhmaṇas are prose texts in which the ritual theologians of the four Vedic schools comment on the performance and meanings of the *śrauta* sacrifice, which they continue to systematize. I will discuss one passage from the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, which, following from the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, reflects developments in the Pañcāla area; one from the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* [*AB*] of the *ṚV*; and several from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* [*ŚB*] linked with the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*. Other than the *Taittirīya* passage, all the other passages come from texts or segments of texts (*AB* 6–8) that were developed east of the Kuru-Pañcāla area in Kosala and Videha,[62] "the new political center in eastern North India" (Witzel 1997*a*, 307). Populations there were more mixed and varied than in the Kuru-Pañcāla lands, and "only in part newly stratified." Kings aspiring to orthodox recognition invited Kuru-Pañcāla and other Brahmins from the west (rather than from intermediate areas) to attend their courts and perform their *śrauta* rituals. Most famous is King Janaka of Videha, "the main protagonist of Kuru-style Vedic civilization in the late Brāhmaṇa

61. See Horsch 2004, 446 n. 63; Olivelle 2004*a*, 508 n. 9.

62. "The Kāṇvīya ŚB is from Kosala" [= ŚBK] and develops as "the main Kosala YV text," the other being the "closely related ŚBM" [M = Mādhyandina recension] (Witzel 1997*a*, 313, 314), translated by Eggeling, and probably from Videha (316). Both it seems go back to a likely lost "original version of the White YV Brāhmaṇa," and are "opposed to the strictly western form of the ritual and its texts (such as in MS, KS, TS)." The present *ŚB* can be regarded as having 2 main parts: the "Yājñavalkya" section (*ŚBM* 1–5 = Ś*BK* 1–7) and the "Śāṇḍilya" section (*SBM* 6–10 = Ś*BK* 8–12), with added material to "this combined version" (Ś*BM* 11–14 = Ś*BK* 13–17) (Witzel 1997*a*, 313–15).

and Upaniṣad periods,"[63] who invited "Brahmans from the west to his frequent *brahmodyas* and to be his *śrauta* priests" (311–13 and n. 281). The interest in relocating orthopraxy can be seen in the way the *ŚB* and other texts seek "to present a *complete* collection, with 'theological' discussion, of all the *śrauta* (and, for the first time, some *gṛhya*) materials" (314). This "late Brāhmaṇa period" also "saw the emergence of a S.E. Koine" covering these areas and including *AB* 6–8 and the *ŚB* among its creations (1989*a*, 252; 1997*a*, 318; cf. 331).

As to usages of *dharma*, there is again nowhere near the frequency of references that one would expect if *dharma* were "a key concept that defined the Brahmanical view of the world and of human life" (Olivelle 2004*a*, 494). I turn first to a *Taittirīya* passage since it is probably the earliest of those I will discuss. *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 3.11.1.20 has a formula that calls the kingdom "abundant Śrī (Prosperity), the wife of Indra, the wife of *dharma* (*dharmapatnī*), who has arisen over all beings."[64] This could make Śrī the wife of both Indra and Varuṇa, who has the frequent epithet *dharmapati* (Olivelle 2004*a*, 495), or, as I think more likely,[65] she could be the wife of both Indra and Dharma, for as we have just seen, Dharma is now a deity who receives sacrifices and can probably be embodied in a sacrificial post. Should it be the latter, we could have an inkling of the kind of thinking that will allow the *Mahābhārata* poets to conceive of their heroine, the Pañcāla princess Draupadī, to have sons of Indra and Dharma among her five husbands as the incarnation of Śrī.

As to the other usages, since it is not always possible to present matters chronologically, I will do so topically, under three headings: (*a*) an instance where *dharma* continues to be associated with kingship through Varuṇa and again seems to imply litigation; (*b*) passages where associations between kingship and *dharma* are instead with Indra; and (*c*) a text that begins to articulate *dharma* in terms of the attributes and privileges of Brahmins. The latter, likely from an added section of the *ŚB*,[66] is probably the most recent of these passages.

Among a few Brāhmaṇa passages[67] linking kingship and *dharma* through Varuṇa, the most revealing one in the *ŚB* describes an offering made during the Rājasūya:

63. He was "a contemporary of [King] Ajātaśatru of Kāśī" (Witzel 1997*a*, 312).

64. Bowles 2007, 93 n. 48 with the Sanskrit formula.

65. Varuṇa seems presently to be a bachelor.

66. The *ŚB* includes an "eastern 'Yājñavalkya' section" (ŚBK 1–7 = ŚBM 1–5, where "eastern" means from Videha), a "western 'Śāṇḍilya' section" (ŚBK 8–12 = ŚBM 6–10, where "western" means from Kosala?), and an addition to "this combined version" (ŚBM 11–14 = ŚBK 13–17 = ŚBM). Our passages come from all three segments.

67. Olivelle 2004*a*, 495, in *TB dharma* occurs three of four times "associated with Varuṇa and the overlord (*adhipati*)." At *TB* 3.9.16.2 in connection with the king who is performing the horse sacrifice, commenting on a *TS* passage, "The overlord is *dharma*. He does, indeed, obtain *dharma*." At *TB* 3.11.4.1 and probably 3.11.1.20, Varuṇa is *dharmapati*. The fourth seems to be *TB* 2.5.7.2, on which see Horsch 2004*a*, 436, just cited regarding "eaters."

> Then to Varuṇa the lord of *dharma* (*dharmapati*) he offers a cake made with barley. Thereby Varuṇa himself, the lord of *dharma*, makes him [the king] the lord of *dharma*. That, surely, is the highest state (*paramátā*) when he becomes the lord of *dharma*. For when someone attains the highest state, (people) come to him (in matters relating) to *dharma*. (*ŚB* 5.3.3.9; Olivelle trans. 2004*a*, 495).

According to Olivelle, *dharma* here "has to do with matters regarding which people come to the king and must refer principally to legal disputes. *Dharma* is thus placed squarely within the public realm of law and social norms that must be overseen by the king. We can now understand why the king is the *dharmapati*, in the same way as Varuṇa, the sovereign who oversees the cosmic *dharma*" (Idem, 495–96). Olivelle finds that the *ŚB* "further supports the meaning of *dharma* as social order founded on law" in a "creation story," which, while not mentioning kings, links *dharma* with the waters, and ends: "But where there is no rain, then the stronger indeed seizes the weaker ones, for the waters are *dharma*" (*ŚB* 11.1.6.24). As Olivelle says, "The argument here corresponds to the 'law of the fish' (*matsyanyāya*) of later Dharmaśāstras," and also of the *Mahābhārata*: that *dharma* reigns when it rains and anarchy reigns when it does not.[68]

Meanwhile, the *AB* passage comes from a late segment of that Brāhmaṇa (*AB* 6–8) which "shows great familiarity with the east and the south-east of Northern India" (Witzel 1997*b*, 320). The segment "prominently deals with royal rituals"—our passage comes in a large section that treats "the royal consecration and the role of the royal priest (*purohita*)"—and was presumably composed by Aitareyins who had come east to enhance this involvement. As Witzel observes, such an emphasis in a *ṚV* Brāhmaṇa devoted to the Hotṛ priest may seem surprising, "but this feature agrees well with the efforts of local kings to enhance their status in the eyes of their more 'advanced' western neighbors." Indeed, *AB* 8.14, right in the middle of the passages we shall now discuss, calls "the great chieftains of the easterners" *saṃrāj*—a term we have seen linked with *dhárman* in the *ṚV* through Varuṇa—"while those of the central Kuru-Pañcāla realm retain the rather traditional small state title *rājan*." As mentioned, we are seeing reflected here not only the second urbanization of India, which came with jungle clearance, increased use of iron tools, and rice cultivation, but the formation once again of "Vedic" states.[69] In what is, according to Olivelle (2004*a*, 494), the only usage of *dharma* in the entire *AB*, the focus of the Rājasūya is turned from Varuṇa to Indra. In virtually identical passages, once Indra and the

68. Olivelle 2004*a*, 496; cf. Horsch 2004, 435; Bowles 2007, 90–91 and n. 35–37.

69. All quotes from Witzel 1997*a*, 321. Witzel even considers the possibility that, while purposefully leaving it unmentioned, *AB* 6–8 may have been "made under the early Magadha kingdom" (1997*a*, 320–21 and n. 333), which soon, at least, came to have heterodox associations.

king have undergone a "great consecration" (*mahābhiṣeka*) and are enthroned, the All-Gods (a generalized divine consensus) announce Indra to the gods while certain "king-makers" (*rājakartāraḥ*) present the king to the people (*janāḥ*):

> Do ye proclaim him, O people [O gods], as overlord and overlordship (*saṃrājaṃ sāṃrājyam*), as paramount ruler and father of paramount rulers (*bhojaṃ bhojapitaram*), as self-ruler and self-rule (*svarājaṃ svārājam*), as sovereign and sovereignty (*virājaṃ vairājyam*), as supreme lord and supreme lordship (*parameṣṭhinam pārameṣṭhyam*), as king and father of kings (*rājānaṃ rājapitaram*). The *kṣatra* (royal power) has been born, the *kṣatriya* has been born, the suzerain of all creation (*viśvasya bhūtasyādhipatir)* has been born, the eater of the commoners (*viśām attā*) has been born, the slayer of foes has been born, the guardian of Brahmins (*brāhmaṇānāṃ goptā*) has been born, the guardian of *dharma* (*dharmasya goptā*) has been born. (*AB* 8.12, 17; slightly modifying Olivelle 2004*a*, 494)

We may note that there is no reminiscence in this "great consecration" that the eastern "peoples" to whom this great king is being presented would any longer be encouraged to think of themselves as "Bhāratas." It will be an agenda of the *Mahābhārata* to invigorate the idea of bringing eastern Indians in under that rubric (see chapter 7). But theoretically, it is something of an advance on the *Puruṣasūkta* and other late Ṛgvedic hymns that begin to focus on Indra rather than Varuṇa. The king now has a whole range of grand titles including *svarāj*, *saṃrāj*, and even *virāj*. He will be a Kṣatriya rooted explicitly in the "royal power" and need come only implicitly from the *rānjanya* or nobility; he slays foes; he is proclaimed in the name of Indra and the absence of Varuṇa;[70] and he is positioned vis à vis the castes—here minus the Śūdras—by his capacity to devour[71] commoners and protect Brahmins.

This topic brings us to two *ŚB* passages that, I believe, carry forward the Ṛgvedic sense of *dharma* as enigma. First is a passage that has provided the title of a book by Charles Malamoud (1996). The intriguing phrase *lokapakti*, "cooking the world," is used at *ŚB* 11.5.7.1 to hail what is achieved by *svādhyāya*, personal vedic recitation or "recitation to oneself."[72] *Svādhyāya* has by now become a hallmark, if never quite the monopoly, of the Brahmin class:

70. Cf Bowles 2007, 92–93 on *ŚB* 5.3.3.9, also concerning the Rājasūya, this time "evoking the special relation that Varuṇa has with *dharma* as *dharmapati*: an oblation made of barley . . . , called a *vāruṇá*, is offered to Varuṇa, the lord of the *dhárma*, thereby he makes the king the lord (*páti*) of *dhárma*, and so people come to him in matters of law (*dhárma upayánti*). In this case the jurisprudential implications appear obvious."

71. Cf. Horsch 436: *TB* 2.5.7.2 makes Agni and Mṛtyu (Death) eaters by Law, that is, where *dharma* implies in conformity with their own natures.

72. See chapter 5 § A. It is one of a Brahmin's five obligatory daily rites, the "sacrifice to *brahman*." According to the commentator Sāyaṇa, "the wise man wards off, by means of the *svādhyāya*, that suffering of the *ātman* that is redeath, *punarmṛtyu*" (Malamoud 1996, 268 n. 1).

> Here is now the praise of the personal recitation (*svādhyāya*) of the Veda. The personal recitation and learning are sources of pleasure for the Brahmin. He acquires presence of mind, becomes independent (*svapati*), and acquires wealth day after day. He sleeps well. He is his own best physician. To him belong mastery of the senses, the power to find joy in a single object, the development of intelligence (*prajñāvṛddhi*), fame, and cooking the world (*lokapakti*). The growing intelligence (*prájñā várdhamānā*) brings to the Brahmin four *dharmas*: Brahmanical stature, fitting deportment, fame, and cooking the world (*brā́hmaṇyaṃ pratirūpacaryā́m yáśo lokapaktím*). The world, as it is being "cooked," gratifies (*bhunakti*) the Brahmin with four *dharmas*—with veneration, with gifts, with the conditions of not being oppressed, and of not being subject to capital punishment (*arcáyā ca dā́nena cājyeyátayā cāvadhyátayā ca*).[73]

By personal recitation, a Brahmin self-generates, as it were, four *dharmas* by which the world recognizes him—one of which is that he "cooks the world" to do just that. And thanks to his having cooked the world in such fashion, the world gratifies him with four more *dharmas* that amount to class privileges and immunities. Scholars have spoken of this usage as "possibly a new connotation of *dharma* as either a specific attribute or a right obligation" (Olivelle 2004*a*, 497), and even as "the most momentous innovation" (Horsch 2004, 436). But how would one translate *dharma* here when "cooking the world" is the metaphor, and hinge *dharma*, that takes one from the first four self-generated *dharmas* to the second four, which are matters of social recognition? Olivelle leaves it as "*dharmas*." Moreover, in suggesting that the plural usages anticipate the Buddhist meaning of *dharma*s as multiple "reals," he joins Horsch, who offers, "Here the universal abstract law is therefore split up into a plurality of concrete factors." Bowles also seems to accept this Buddhist analogy (2007, 94). Olivelle also sees this usage as similar to the *Śrautasūtras*' "ritual use of *svadharma*," which "refers to the fact that a particular rite has its own ritual details (*dharmas*) specific and limited to it and not taken over from or extended to other rites" (2004*a*, 502). I do not see either of these connotations in "cooking the world." The Buddhist theory of multiple "reals" certainly includes no "real" comparable to "cooking the world"; and *ŚB* 11.5.7.1 hardly covers specific ritual details, either of a ritual or a person. Meanwhile, Horsch scales down "cooking the world" to "maturity in the world (i.e., religious influence in the (social) environment)," and, without offering a translation, takes the first four as "the moral

73. First half from Malamoud trans. 1996, 23; second from Olivelle trans. 2004*a*, 497, both slightly modified; cf. Horsch 2004, 436; Bowles 2007, 93–94.

characteristics of the Brahman" and the second four as "rights and privileges" due to him in return. Malamoud circumlocutes to make do with "duties." Bowles says that "Law is becoming duty" here (2007, 94).

None of this quite handles the metaphor "cooking the world." As the hinge *dharma* in the passage, "cooking the world" is how one gets from the first "four foundations" to the second four. And the first four have their foundation in a bottomless resource: personal recitation of the Veda. Moreover, before one gets to the first four, personal recitation is the foundation for such intermediary supports as learning, presence of mind, independence, wealth, good sleep, self-medication, mastery of the senses, the power to find joy in a single object, and—most important in that it is mentioned last and also twice as another hinge (though not a *dharma*)—developed and growing intelligence. As Malamoud demonstrates, the metaphor of "cooking the world" is grounded in the work and inspiration of the primal sages. Desire, consecration for sacrifice (*dīkṣā*), sweat, toil (*śrama*), creative fervor (*tapas*), painful overheating, and exhaustion go into preparing food for gods, who like their food cooked. These are mystic connections (*bandhus*) in a "course" or "way" (*adhvan*) that is defined by "ceaseless movement . . . from one end of the sacrificial ground to the other," one that regulates an "effort" that mimes the "labor of the Vedic seers, who so strongly desired the Universe, in the beginning, that they brought it into existence" (Malamoud 1996, 33). "Once consecrated, one prepares a space for himself and one is born into a world one has made by oneself." That is, one cooks one's own world (45). The "metaphorical cooking of the sacrificer . . . precedes the actual cooking of the offering," the first being "the genuine oblation," the latter a "substitute." Digestion, milk, sperm, gestation, marriage, cremation, and renunciation are also homologized to cooking. By cooking himself, the Brahmin can thus perfect a self while also cooking up the respect others have for him. This world, cooked by the Brahmin, is the 'created' world which he creates and organizes around himself in the sacrifice." But "the world cooked by sacrificial activity" has no raw natural opposite. "Everything is already cooked such that all that remains is to re-cook it. This sacrificial fire fed by the Brahmin does nothing other than redouble the activity of the sun . . .; 'That [sun] cooks everything in this world (*eṣá vā idáṃ sárvam pacati*), by means of the days and the nights, the fortnights, months, seasons, and year (*saṃvatsareṇa*).[74] And this [Agni] cooks what has been cooked by that [sun]: "he is the cooker of that which has been cooked," said Bharadvāja of Agni, for he cooks what has been cooked'" (Ibid., 48,

74. The English translation in Malamoud 1996, 48 has, incorrectly, "years" in the plural. The year is a significant totality in this particular cuisine; see the next passage discussed.

quoting *ŚB* 10.4.2.19). To paraphrase, everything is cooked all the way up and all the way down. It is also only a short step to say that "time cooks" (*kālaḥ pacati*), a signature saying of the *Mahābhārata*.[75]

As regards this innovative usage of *dharma* on the societal front, one thing is clear. As Bowles puts it, the passage marks "a clear divergence between the activities and characteristics of one social group, the brāhmans, and the activities of other people, 'those that are being cooked.' "[76] Indeed, we may detect a certain correlation with *AB* 8.12 and 17, where kings and Indra are "guardians of the Brahmins" and "eaters of the commoners." On the scale of the sun, Brahmins may be cooked like everyone else, but at least they cook the world in a way that avoids their being eaten by kings. I believe the safest thing to say as regards anticipation of later usages of *dharma* lies not in new connotations having to do with duties, which are not that clear, but in recognizing that while they have been recording ways in which the king is becoming a law unto himself, some Brahmins have begun searching for a way to say similar things about themselves. Bearing this in mind, however, I think we should also notice that the second hinge term that has been translated as "developed" and "growing 'intelligence'" (*prajñā*) could also be translated as "wisdom." When the Buddha and the early Buddhists, soon enough, link *dharma* with "wisdom" (*prajñā*) gained by self-discipline and self-cultivation, they will find Brahmins well prepared to be among their conversation partners.

Finally, in a passage featuring some of these same cooking themes, *ŚB* 14.2.2.29 supplies the formula, "A well-supporting (*su-dharma*) support (*dharma*) thou art" (*dharmāsi sudharmeti*; Eggeling trans. 1963, Part 5, 485) as addressed to the walking sacrificer—first as the sun, and then as the specially prepared *pravargya* pot, said among other things to represent the year. Between the two formulas, the sun is described as follows: "Truly, that one, who burns yonder, is the maintenance (*dharmā*), since he maintains (*dhārayati*) this universe (or: everything here), through him this universe is maintained (*dhṛtam*)" (Horsch trans. 2004, 433; cf. 446 n. 56). The sun is being compared here with the *pravargya* pot in which milk steams up in a fiery column. As we saw earlier in this chapter, both the pot and the fiery column of this ritual may have been enigmatized in *ṚV* 1.164.43 and 50 as providing the "first foundations" (*dhármaṇs*) which, in the second of these two verses, reach up to heaven. In the *ŚB*, the pot

75. This paragraph shortens and modifies a discussion in Hiltebeitel and Kloetzli 2004, 558–59. Recall that when Agni "assumes the form of the universal fire, the Sun," he "becomes the foundation [i.e., *dhárman*] for all things" (Brereton 2004, 452).

76. Bowles 2007, 94, goes on to say, I think with too much backreading, that "the relationship between them is reciprocal and complementary" and that "[s]uch a description would not at all be out of place in the *dharma* literature." *Varṇa*-reciprocity is not the point of this metaphor.

is itself the sun as the "head of the sacrifice" that is being restored to the decapitated Viṣṇu as a secret, dangerous, and all-encompassing option within the *soma* sacrifice. In this text, the *pravargya* can be performed within the Rājasūya as well as in rituals where the sacrificer would be a Brahmin (*ŚB* 14.2.2.47). But in other texts the *pravargya* also has strong associations with the Aśvamedha (Houben 2000, 502, 526). Whatever his status, as he walks the ritual arena, the sacrificer would be a very enigmatic "support" (*dharma*) for such erstwhile "first foundations." Coming in the last section of the *ŚB* to have been composed, the passage may already breathe the air of the Āraṇyakas[77] and Upaniṣads.

F. The Upaniṣads

The next Brahmanical texts to generate innovative, if not numerous, usages of *dharma* are the Upaniṣads: texts that "form the (mostly) secret teaching at the end of Vedic study of each school" (Witzel 1997*a*, 331). Olivelle finds the term in "just nine passages" (we shall note one more) in the four oldest Upaniṣads, among them most notably the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (*BĀU*) and the *Chāndogya* (*ChU*) (2004*a*, 498). Twelve or thirteen Upaniṣads are accepted as completing the Vedic canon, that is, they were produced within one or another of the four Vedic schools, and are regarded as the "end" or "completion of the Veda" (*vedānta*). Most scholars have taken the earlier Upaniṣads to be pre-Buddhist, but there is also some thought that even the early Upaniṣads may contain post-Buddhist interpolations, which may include some of our pertinent passages.[78] We thus do well to keep early Buddhism in mind, just as the reverse will be true when we come to the ways that early Buddhist texts portray the Buddha as speaking about the Vedas and Brahmins, and also *to* Brahmins. While the Upaniṣads reflect intensified interest in increasing social stratification, they are largely silent on changing conditions that are making northeastern India "a real melting pot": the consolidation of older tribes and the settlement of new immigrant ones; the emergence of large kingdoms and states; and the beginnings of India's second urbanization (Witzel 1997*a*, 328–29). Once the eastern provenance of the *BĀU* is recognized as making it a continuation of the *ŚB*, it is sufficient to recognize the period as one where "the geographical horizon of the early Upaniṣads stretches from Gandhāra to Aṅga," or Afghanistan to Bihar, and that wandering sages traveled extensively exchanging ideas of widening currency (330).

77. According to Olivelle, there are only three usages in the Āraṇyakas, two rather obscure (2004*a*, 497).
78. See Bronkhorst 2007, 112–35, especially 119–20, 130; 219–40, most notably 226–30, 236.

The Upaniṣads continue to mention *dharma* only where Brahmins concern themselves with matters that do not go explicitly beyond their own class, or in passages that follow up and continue earlier developments to shore up and define their duties, options, and privileges as a class. Thus the *ChU* speaks of the "three types of persons whose torso is *dharma*"—"the one who pursues sacrifice, Vedic recitation, and gift-giving"; "the one who is devoted to austerity"; and "the celibate student of the Veda living permanently at his teacher's house" (2.23.1). These three apparently optional and not yet serialized "modes of life" are pertinent mainly to Brahmins.[79] Such a Brahmin-centered orientation is especially clear in one of the preliminary cosmogonies in the *BĀU*. In the beginning, *brahman* was alone and "had not fully developed" (*na vyabhavat*). First, along with certain ruling gods (Indra, Varuṇa, Soma, Rudra, Yama, Mṛtyu, etc.), it created "the ruling power" (*kṣatra*) to which a Brahmin pays homage at a Rājasūya (it is as if Brahmins have already been created with the *brahman*). When *brahman* still "did not become fully developed," it created the Vaiśya class with various gods; when it still "did not become fully developed," it created the Śūdra class with various gods.[80]

> It still did not become fully developed. So it created *dharma*, a form superior to and surpassing itself. And *dharma* is here the ruling power of the ruling power (*kṣatrasya kṣatram*). Hence there is nothing higher than the *dharma* (*tasmād dharmāt paraṃ nāsti*). Therefore, a weaker man makes demands of a stronger man by appealing to the Law (*dharmeṇa*), just as one does by appealing to a king. Now, *dharma* is nothing but the truth. Therefore, when a man speaks the truth, they say (*āhur*) that he speaks *dharma*; and when a man speaks *dharma*, that he speaks the truth. They are really the same thing. (Olivelle trans. 1998, 49–51, slightly modified in accordance with *Idem* 2005*b*, 125 and 132; cf. *Idem* 2004*a*, 499)

Here for the first time "Law" is an unexceptionable translation of *dharma*.[81] Clearly, it relates to litigation in a king's court. Granted "the weaker man" could

79. For extensive discussion, see Olivelle 2005*b*, 53–74; cf. *Idem*, 1993, 108; 2004*a*, 500–501; Bowles 2007, 95–97.

80. *BĀU* 1.4.11–13. The passage completes an *adhyāya* that begins with an identification of the first being as *puruṣa* because he is "shaped like a man" (1.4.1) and describes an initial phase of cosmogony that includes the creation of male and female from the "self" as "the supercreation of *brahman*" (Olivelle) or "highest creation of Brahmā" (Radhakrishnan 1953, 166) (*brāhmaṇo 'tisṛṣṭi*; 1.4.6).

81. See Olivelle 2004*a*, 499 and 508 n. 17; Bowles 2007, 72. Olivelle teases this meaning along a bit, for example, "By *appealing to* the Law" and ". . . to the king" are a little free for just the instrumentals *dharmeṇa* and *rājñā*, but the implication is sound. Building up to the summation of his hypothesis of a continuum from King Varuṇa to the Buddha, Olivelle considers that *kṣatrasya kṣatram*, "the divine principle that gave legitimacy and meaning to a worldly ruler, the term associated with the divine sovereign Varuṇa, would be a natural choice to define the new dispensation, the new truth (*satya*) that the enlightened one had discovered" (2004*a*, 504).

betoken justice for all and that *dharma* as truth-speaking could mean that he could count on truthful witnesses. But it is especially Brahmins who would be true witnesses for themselves.[82] The passage and the one on "cooking the world" are from the same school and milieu. In one, the Brahmin grows the intelligence to cook up *dharmas* that favor him; in the other, the pre-cosmic *brahman* does not fully develop until it has created *dharma* to keep Brahmins on top.[83]

As to the dialogical teachings for which the Upaniṣads are best known, *dharma* has a few usages that are tangential to expressions of the oneness of the self (*ātman*) and *brahman*. Two occur where the *BĀU* features its famous sage Yājñavalkya. Although Yājñavalkya is renowned already in the *ŚB*, where he offers novel ideas mainly as an expert on ritual,[84] in the *BĀU*, still the innovative thinker, "he focuses on teachings of the self" (Black 2007a, 75). Yet here we come up against the question of whether his innovations, particularly about karma but also about *dharma*, come up in a pre-Buddhist or post-Buddhist section of the *BĀU*. This Upaniṣad has three sections (*kāṇḍas*) that were carefully redacted into an omnibus whole by pulling together oral material from different Vājasaneyī sources, possibly subschools. Yājñavalkya is known and mentioned in all three *kāṇḍas*; but the one in which he makes his most sustained appearances, the *Yājñavalkya-kāṇḍa* (*BĀU* 3–4), has late-looking touches: among them, that whereas elsewhere in this Upaniṣad he is described as a pupil of Uddālaka Āruṇi (*BĀU* 6.3.7), the great sage of the *ChU*, in the *Yājñavalkya-kāṇḍa* (henceforth *YK*) nothing is mentioned of this disciplehood, and, rather to the contrary, Yājñavalkya finds occasion to "shame" Uddālaka and demonstrate his own superiority while settling "old scores" (Bronkhorst 2007, 120, 229). Bronkhorst brings this consideration into an argument that the *YK* is a late and post-Buddhist piece of "hagiography from beginning to end" (236) designed to put the origins of the karma-as-reincarnation doctrine into the mouth of a Brahmin—that is, Yājñavalkya—to relieve Brahmanism of the embarrassment that this doctrine would otherwise appear to have originated

82. Compare *GDhS* 21.19 where, again, although "the weaker man" (*durbala*) who is to be protected from harm sounds like he could be someone from poor and/or low social circumstances; the context makes it evident that the rule applies first of all to Brahmins. I believe Olivelle speaks too generally on this matter of "common law" in "Power of Words," where he reads the conclusion of the passage just cited (*BĀU* 1.4.14) anachronistically to have "confirmed" that an Aśokan sense of *dharma* for all "must have penetrated the common vocabulary of the people" (2005*b*, 132; cf. 125, 129) even before Aśoka. Even if the "they" in *āhur* ("they say") "stands for what is commonly seen among the people" (Ibid.), the people quoted would be primarily Brahmins. Surely the Upaniṣads do not allow for such generalized ethnography.

83. Cf. Bowles 2007, 72: *dharma* "is now independent of any other factor, yet clearly associated with the creation and separation of the four *varṇas*." See also Horsch 2004, 437.

84. Black 2007, 68–69, 74–75: "on one occasion Yājñavalkya expresses the view that brahmins are the most important aspect of performing a sacrifice" not just because they make a place appropriate for sacrifice anywhere they go (the view of an interlocutor), but because "the individual participants are more essential than the ritual actions themselves" (75; *ŚB* 3.1.1.4–5).

from kings[85] and gained currency only through the intermediacy of Brahmins—among others, and above all, of Uddālaka.[86] Yet even if Bronkhorst is right about its implications for tracing the karmic rebirth doctrine to non-Vedic sources of the "greater Magadha" area, which I believe he makes quite plausible, the *YK*, which has seemed to many scholars to be the oldest part of the *BĀU*, could still contain old and not just archaic features and components.[87] Such considerations must apply to what Yājñavalkya has to say about *dharma*, which he mentions only twice, and both times in the *YK*.

The first usage speaks of a sequence of pairs of opposites where the Self is made of light and the lightless, desire and the desireless, anger and the angerless, *dharma* and non-*dharma*. The list implies an ascendance, with each pair encompassing the preceding (Olivelle 2004*a*, 498). What is most interesting is that the passage goes on to offer views on *karma* that Bronkhorst takes to exemplify Yājñavalkya's teaching of "a self that is not affected by actions" (118), and to illustrate the incongruity of arguing, as some orthogenicist theorists have done, that his karma doctrine could "have arisen in ritualistic circles" (132–33):

> Hence there is this saying: "He's made of this. He's made of that." What a man turns out to be depends on how he acts (*yathākārī*) and how he conducts himself (*yathācārī*). If his actions [*karman*, singular] are good, he will turn into something good (*puṇyaḥ puṇyena karmaṇā bhavati*). If his actions are bad, he will turn into something bad by bad action (*pāpaḥ pāpena*). And so people say: "A person (*puruṣa*) here consists simply of desire." A man resolves in accordance with his desire (*kāma*), acts in accordance with his resolve, and turns out to be in accordance with his action. (*BĀU* 4.4.5; Olivelle trans. 1998, 121)

According to Bronkhorst, since "there is no such thing as bad ritual activity in the Veda," a ritualistic explanation does not hold (2007, 133). "Made of everything" up to and including *dharma* and *adharma*, the self remains unaffected, as the passage goes on to explain: "Now, a man who does not desire—who is

85. "There are reasons to think that the Yājñavalkya-Kāṇḍa . . . was primarily composed to remove the stain of ignorance from the Vedic tradition"; that it was a "late" plot to unlink the karma teachings from a "non-Brahmanical origin" whereby "the doctrine was 'dressed up' to look Vedic" (Bronkhorst 2007, 119–20). Of course, all these passages have echoes of Brahmanical teachings, principally in connection with Soma/the moon; and the king is represented as a Kṣatriya, and thus presumably *ārya*, and is not from "greater Magadha," where the *BĀU* was likely composed. If Bronkhorst is right, the redactors of this "hagiography" took Brahmin claims to a new level.

86. On Uddālaka as the chief person through whom the Upaniṣads trace the doctrine of rebirth and karmic retribution to a king, see *BĀU* 6.2, *ChU* 5.3–10, and (more uncertainly as to it being a king) *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* 1 (Bronkhorst 2007, 112–19; 230–31; cf. Black 2007, 100, 116–19, 124–29). The king in the first two texts is Jaivali Pravāhana, a Pañcāla who also upstages Brahmins at *ChU* 1.8.1–8 (Black 2007, 108).

87. For Olivelle, it comes from the *BĀU*'s "oldest core" (1998, 502–4, 521–23). See Brereton 2006.

freed from desires, whose desires are fulfilled, whose only desire is his self—. . . *brahman* he is, and to *brahman* he goes" (*BĀU* 4.5.6; Olivelle 1998, 121). It is thus explained how *dharma* and its opposite are the highest ground for understanding how karma works, while the Self is something else: indeed, the only desire worth really having, the only desire that can be fulfilled. Shortly before this, Yājñavalkya has compared the state "where all the desires are fulfilled, where the self is the only desire," with a man's embrace of "a woman he loves" (*BĀU* 4.3.2). This brings us to a passage that could be said to take us directly into Yājñavalkya's lovelife, though probably the end of it.

One might argue that the inclusion of *dharma* and *adharma* as merit and demerit in an ethical explanation of the mechanism of karmic rebirth, an explanation grounded in desire and resolve, would be intelligible in a milieu familiar with Buddhism, and that the Self as the only desire worth having could be a riposte to the Buddhist doctrine of no-self (*anātman*). But the point would have to be purely comparative, and uncomplicated by any philological or historical considerations. The second passage—the one that Olivelle omits from his count of Upaniṣadic usages of *dharma*—raises different possibilities. It occurs in the *YK* version of Yājñavalkya's famous dialogue with his dear wife Maitreyī (*BĀU* 4.5), but not in the other version of that dialogue which occurs in the first *kāṇḍa* of the same Upaniṣad at *BĀU* 2.4. Indeed, each telling has two extant versions, making four, since both come in a Kāṇva and Mādhyandina recension. There is a little variation in the two *YK* passages that mention *dharma*.

In the *YK* versions, Maitreyī is acknowledged at the beginning of their exchange as a *brahmavādinī*, "a woman who talks about *brahman*," or, in Olivelle's translation, "a woman who took part in theological discussions" (*BĀU* 4.5.1).[88] Yājñavalkya is telling her about the self as he is making a settlement of his property with her and her co-wife Kātyayanī, as he is about to leave them to begin another "mode of life"[89]—which probably means that he is about to die.[90] After a stretch in which he tells Maitreyī that what is held dear, beginning with husband and wife, is dear only out of love or desire for the self,[91] he presents a series of less tangible and more perplexing similes until Maitreyī finally breaks in:

88. Cf. Lindquist 2008, 421: "a talker about *brahman*"—noting, "This may be a technical term for someone who participates in public debate (of which we have no direct evidence for Maitreyī), or it may simply mean that she had a direct interest in discussing religious and philosophical matters." Lindquist takes the dialogue at *BĀU* 4.5 to culminate a "teaching narrative" that gets increasingly private and, in this case, "intimate."

89. As Olivelle 1998, 112 translates *vṛttam* here at 4.5.1, attentive to there being no mention of a "life-stage" or *āśrama*: in particular, no mention of *saṃnyāsa* as renunciation or retirement. As Olivelle 1981, 266 demonstrates, *samnyāsa* in the sense of the final life-stage is not found in the Upaniṣads, and has there only one occurrence in *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 3.2.6, where it "is a discipline undertaken by a *yati* [ascetic] and, therefore, not synonymous with a *yati*'s state of life."

90. See Brereton 2006, 31, 37, 343 and discussion; Olivelle 1998, 502; Bronkhorst 2007, 233–34.

91. The refrain, repeated twelve times in 4.5.6, is *ātmanas tu kāmāya*, "but out of love (or desire) for the self."

> "Now, sir, you have utterly confused me! I cannot perceive this at all." He replied. "Look—I haven't said anything confusing. This self, you see, is imperishable (*avināśī*); it has an indestructible nature (*anucchitti-dharmā*)." (Olivelle trans. 1998, 131)

That is a translation of the Kāṇva recension. The Mādhyandina recension has an additional phrase at the end:

> Then Yājñavalkya said, "Surely, [my dear,] I speak nothing confusing. Unvanishing (*avināśī*) is this self here, [my dear]. It's nature precludes dissolution (*anucchitidharmā*), but there is a merging of its constituents (*mātrāsaṃsargas tv asya bhavati*).[92] (Brereton 2006, 339)

Brereton offers this comment on the *Mādhyandina* version, which he sees as the earliest since "it has an older diction": "Even with Yājñavalkya's explanation, we might well remain sympathetic to Maitreyī's puzzlement. . . . The point he wishes to make . . . is that it is only perception of objects that disappears at death. . . . [T]he self does not disappear with the disappearance of sense faculties and objects of sense and therefore does not disappear at death" (2006, 340). The parallel version of this dialogue has at this point something entirely different: Maitreyī is confused because Yājñavalkya has told her "after death there is no awareness" (*BĀU* 2.4.13). But Yājñavalkya's reassurance is similar.[93]

I will make no attempt to sort out the different views of the textual histories of these variants, on which every possible priority seems to have been proposed concerning the two versions as a whole, not to mention the recensional differences and individual passages.[94] But it seems altogether plausible that Brereton is right in seeing the *YK* version of the dialogue as earlier than the version at *BĀU* 2.4. It alone seems to retain segments of an "old rhythmic prose" core that concerned "a conversation about death" (2006, 341), especially at the beginning and the end, with our passage included in the conclusion. Yet Brereton's "reconstruction produces irregular lines" at this point, leaving him with "no more than possibilities" (339). It may also be that he is right that the Mādhyandina text is the older of the two *YK* versions (329, 340), which were, however, both modified by expansions. But in our present passage, it

92. Cf. Bronkhorst 2007, 233 n. 35 quoting this translation by Slaje (2002, 15): "Look, actually imperishable, this [your] central instance [of cognition] (*ātman*) here bears [indeed] the property of indestructibility. However, it [re]joins with (*saṃsarga*) [its causes,] the material components (*mātrā*)." I cannot imagine this translation helping Matrieyī, and also must admit to some confusion here on what others say: Bronkhorst, that the two passages are the same; Olivelle (1999, 522) that the Mādhyandina text "adds" this clause and then follows it with "a long passage that is identical to" *BĀU* 4.3.23–30.

93. Olivelle 1998, 69–70; Brereton 1986, 106; 2006, 331; Bronkhorst 2007, 234.

94. See Brereton 2006, 342 n. 48; Bronkhorst 2007, 127; 220 n. 3, 232–35, 239–40, with mostly dissimilar views.

would be the Mādhyandina text that expands the Kāṇva text to explain something further about the self whose "nature precludes dissolution."[95] Thus Bronkhorst, were he to grant that the *YK* versions kept elements of an archaic text, would also have grounds to see its version as a late and post-Buddhist expansion of that text.

The term *dharma* (actually *dharman*) here is usually translated by "nature" or "property," and justly so since it follows a long commentarial tradition.[96] It can be related to Ṛgvedic usages where *dhárman* can mean "foundational nature." But note that Halbfass cites the Mādhyandina usage *anuchittidharman* in this dialogue (= *ŚB* 14.7.3.15) in conjunction with Pāli *upādavayadhammin*, "subject to origination and decay" and as an instance where "since ancient times *dharma* . . . [can mean] 'property,' 'characteristic attribute,' 'essential feature,' or more generally . . . 'defining factor' or 'predicate.'"[97] The question remains whether its usage in the *YK* is an old part of an early rhythmic prose core, as Brereton finds possible, or is a novel usage interpolated into the text to make a clinching point to Maitreyī. If it is the latter, there could be a post-Buddhist complementarity in Yājñavalkya's two usages of *dharma*.[98] In the first, the self transcends *dharma* and *adharma*; in the second, it has an indestructible *dharman*. It is interesting that *dharman* is used in getting as far as one can to the bottom of the most important things. That is, one could take it that the self "has an indestructible 'foundation.'"

Yājñavalkya, a most interesting character, is the only person in the early Upaniṣads to have anything to say about *dharma* in the dialogues for which the early Upaniṣads are famous. In fact, he says precious little. What is especially striking is that he uses the term only once—our first *YK* instance, addressing King Janaka of Videha—in his extensive conversations at royal courts, where his hosts and interlocutors include various kings. Yet as Bronkhorst indicates, the *YK* makes quite a setting for him to unveil the teaching of *karma* as reincarnation. Yājñavalkya describes *karma* as still a secret teaching when he takes another Brahmin, Jāratkārava Ārtabhaga, privately aside so that it will not be discussed in public at Janaka's court, concluding: "A man turns into something good by good action (*puṇyena karmaṇā*) and into something bad by bad action."[99] On the

95. Bronkhorst 2007, 239–40 thinks the Kāṇva text is older.

96. Radhakrishnan 1953, 285 does the same, following a gloss by Śankara of *dharman* as *lakṣaṇa*, "mark, trait, feature," that is, "it has the mark of indestructibility."

97. Halbfass 1988, 334 and 555 n. 1; cf. 319, 551 n. 44, 555 n. 1. Cf. Gethin 2004, 533, emphasizing the usage of *dharma* and *dhamma* as the second member of a *bahuvrīhi* compound as having "the sense of a particular nature or quality possessed by something"; Horsch 2004, 440, 448 n. 86.

98. Brereton says that the seeming shift from a departure denoting death in *BĀU* 2.4.1 to the YK's departure for different "mode of life" (see n. 89 above) could have occurred "to support the emerging *dharma* vocabulary and the ideal of renunciation" (2006, 331). This would imply a third usage.

99. *BĀU* 3.2.13; Olivelle trans. 1998, 81; see Bronkhorst 2007, 122, 232.

other hand, when King Pravāhana Jaivali of Pañcāla teaches the "five fires"/"two paths" doctrine of transmigration to Uddālaka (*ChU* 5.3–10), he says it had before that "never reached Brahmins" so that "[i]n all the worlds . . . government (*praśāsana*) has belonged exclusively to royalty (Kṣatriyas)."[100] Those "whose behavior is pleasant" achieve rebirth in the upper three *varṇas* and "people of foul behavior can expect to enter a foul womb, like that of a dog, a pig, or an outcaste woman (*caṇḍālayoni*)" (*ChU* 5.10.7; Olivelle trans. 1998, 235, 237). What leads to heavenly worlds begins by gift-giving as offering to the gods (*ChU* 5.10.3); and in the parallel passage of *BĀU* 6.2.10, the same is achieved "by offering sacrifices, by giving gifts, and by performing austerities."[101] Similarly, King Aśvapati Kaikeya instructs five wealthy landlord (*mahāśāla*) Brahmins about burning up "all the bad things" (*sarve pāpmānaḥ*) in the sacrificial fire with knowledge of "the self common to all men" (*ātmānaṃ vaiśvānaram*)"—that is, in the fire of the self that unites all men in the name of Agni. He concludes,

> Therefore, even if a man who has this knowledge were to give his leftovers to an outcaste (*caṇḍāla*), thereby he would have made an offering in that self of his which is common to all men. On this, there is this verse: "As around their mother here, hungry children gather, So at the fire sacrifice do all the beings gather." (*ChU* 5.11–24; Olivelle trans. 1998, 245)

Both of these learned kings see the big social picture in which sacrificial activity unfolds: the first divisively, marking off rebirth in the upper *varṇas* from rebirth as an outcaste; the second more embracingly. For him, the fire of the self is not only the great purifier but the mother of the world's hungry children! He seems to be admonishing the Brahmins on matters of social privilege when he tells them that each of them would have suffered a grievous harm had they not come to him. If so, it is a noteworthy to find such a message treasured in a Brahmin-kept text.

Among later Vedic Upaniṣads the only one to say anything important about *dharma* is the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (*KU*), in its well-known opening dialogue between the boy Naciketas and Death (Mṛtyu, Yama). Other than Death, it is again a tale about Brahmins and about death. Naciketas has been sent by his irritated father to Death because he has belittled the bedraggled cows the father passed off as gifts. In Death's house, when Naciketas asks to know whether a man exists after death

100. *ChU* 5.3.6, Olivelle trans. See Black 2007, 101, 103; Bronkhorst 2007, 113–14, 124, 231. In going over the question of Kṣatriya/royal "authorship" of various teachings, Black argues that "transmission of Upaniṣadic knowledge" by Kṣatriyas would be an artifice of Brahmin composers for whom there was "nothing to lose, and a lot to gain" in portraying "this knowledge as indispensable to the king's political power" (128–29). But "authorship" and "transmission" are not the same as attributing origins.

101. *BĀU* omits the references to "behavior," and also the line about "government," while accentuating instead Uddalaka's submission to the king as a pupil (6.2.7–8); cf. *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* 1.

or not, Death first tells him to ask something else, since "it's a subtle *dharma* (*aṇur eṣa dharmaḥ*)." But when Naciketas demonstrates his worthiness, Death discloses "this subtle point of doctrine (*dharmyam aṇum*)," and in the next stanza one learns—as Janaka does from Yājñavalkya—that it is "different from *dharma* and *adharma* (*anyatra dharmādanyatrādharmād*)."[102] The *KU* also has a third usage of *dharma* outside the Yama–Naciketas dialogue that speaks of the error of seeing *dharmas* as "distinct" (*dharmān pṛthak*; 4.14). Taking stock of all these usages, Bowles suggests that one may regard the "subtle *dharma*" or "doctrine"—which ultimately refers to the "*ātman* theory"—as something like a "true *dharma*" that "stands over and above" *dharma* and *adharma* as a duality, as well as over multiple *dharmas* as "various rules and obligations" (2007, 102). Like Horsch, who also underscores the meaning "doctrine" in the two "subtle *dharma*" references (2004, 437), Bowles rightly rejects taking the plural as influenced by the Buddhist theory of *dharmas* as multiple factors of experience; but in doing so, he adds that, "[o]ddly enough," the "subtle *dharma*" references "are not entirely unlike the Buddha's use of the word when he describes the entirety of his teaching as 'the dhamma.' "[103]

I find Bowles's discussion illuminating, and all the more so when one sees how the text buttresses Death's "subtle *dharma*" with two words for "foundation" or "support." First, one meets the old standard term *pratiṣṭhā*, used doubly in 2.11 only for it to be superseded:

> 11. Satisfying desires is the foundation of the universe (*jagataḥ pratiṣṭhām*);
> Uninterrupted rites bring ultimate security;
> Great and widespread praise is the foundation (*pratiṣṭhām*)—
> these you have seen wise Naciketas,
> and having seen, firmly rejected.[104]

Yama commends Naciketas for repudiating these old foundations of Vedic ritual and *mantra*. Then, just before he returns in 2.13 to the "subtle *dharma*" he had first urged Naciketas to forego, he establishes that it will be about something much deeper than those old ritual "foundations":

> 12. The primeval one who is hard to perceive,
> wrapped in mystery, hidden in the cave,
> residing within the impenetrable depth—

102. *KU* 1.21; 2.13–14; Olivelle trans. 1998, 379, 385. Olivelle translates the last reference as "different from the right doctrine and the wrong," and suggests that Naciketas is now the speaker, but that it is not certain.

103. Bowles 2007, 102 n. 83. Cf. Olivelle 1993, 69–70, discussing *Mbh* 14.48.14–17, where, "Bewildered by the array of expert opinions regarding the true *dharma*, the seers ask the creator god, Brahmā" about it.

104. This is from Olivelle trans. 1998, 383, except that I prefer "universe" over "world" for *jagat*.

> Regarding him as god, an insight
> gained by inner contemplation (*adhyātmayogādhimena*),
> both sorrow and joy the wise abandon.

The "subtle *dharma*," just about to be so named, will be about how the mystery of the "primeval one" hidden in the impenetrable depth of "cave of the heart"[105] can be gained by inner yogic contemplation. And this, Yama soon enough reveals, is to be gained precisely by a newer kind of yogic "support" called *ālambana*:[106]

> 17. This is the support that's best (*ālambanaṃ śreṣṭham*)!
> This is the support supreme (*ālambanaṃ param*)!
> And when one knows this support (*ālambanam*),
> he rejoices in *brahman*'s world (*brahmaloke*).[107]

That this "subtle *dharma*" should be poised between an abandoned "foundation" of ritual and mantra and a liberating "support" of yoga may remind us of the way *dhárman* as a "foundational" enigma was buttressed by usages of *dharúṇa*—cosmological "supports"—in *ṚV* 5.15. On the one hand, this new "subtle *dharma*" still has its resonances with both old and new terms meaning "foundation" and "support." On the other, it would also seem to have been party to Brahmanical and probably Buddhist conversations relating *dharma* to *yoga*. On the Brahmanical side, such conversations become commonplace in the *Mahābhārata* and *Manu*, as we shall see in chapter 5. This suggests that there would have to be a historical dimension to the choice of *dharma* from among such older and newer terms for "what holds or supports" to bring these meanings together.[108]

The *KU* is certainly later than the beginnings of Buddhism. More controversially, Bronkhorst makes an interesting case that the same may be said for the *YK* passages where Yājñavalkya gives his two ever-so-brief *dharma* talks.

105. On the "cave of the heart," see *KU* 1.14; 3.1; 4.6–7. Although it is perhaps an added verse, just after this sequence, *KU* 2.20 says that self hidden in the heart is "finer than the finest (*aṇoraṇiyān*), larger than the largest," confirming by its use again of *aṇu* that the "subtle doctrine" is about the *ātman*. Cf. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 3.1.7, with the *ātman* as *sūkṣma* rather than *aṇu*: "more minute than the minute (*sūkṣmāc ca tat sūkṣmataram*), . . . farther than the farthest . . . yet near at hand . . . hidden within the cave of the heart" Olivelle 1998, 449). Both no doubt hark back to *ChU* 3.14.2–4: the self in the heart is smaller than a mustard seed, greater than all the worlds. Cf. *BĀU* 4.1.7 on space as the *pratiṣṭhā* of the heart.

106. Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* uses it to mean "support" or "stimulus"; see 1.38, 1.10, 4.11. The support is vedic: as one leading a student life (*brahmacarya*), Naciketas' "support" is to utter the syllable Oṃ which "all the Vedas disclose" (2.15–16). Cf. Monier-Williams [1899] 1964, 153, mentioning no earlier usages than Pāṇini (probably fourth century) and a Buddhist usage.

107. Olivelle trans. throughout (1998, 385), except as noted.

108. I thank Greg Bailey for calling my attention to this way of formulating this "historical dimension" (personal communication, December 2006).

As with all Upaniṣạdic conversations about *dharma*, however, kings are mainly in the background, if they are there at all, and they have nothing to say about *dharma* themselves. As to whether Buddhists were in the background, the Upaniṣads are silent. On the face of it, then, an intriguing fact has emerged. Remarkably enough, one could say that the Buddha, said to have been born a prince in a royal family of Ikṣvāku descent, will be the first Kṣatriya to speak about *dharma*. And he will do so frequently and most extensively with Brahmins, while also having numerous conversations with kings.

4

Early Buddhism

Three Baskets of *Dharma*

Where to begin with *dharma* in early Buddhism? Suddenly, we have a truly vast topic. If we extend the notion of early Buddhism through our classical period, we have to consider not only the ways *dharma* is treated and transmitted in the different collections or "baskets" of texts that comprise the Pāli canon of Theravāda Buddhism but, once we begin to unfold that process, some of the variations in the so-called eighteen schools of "Hīnayāna" Buddhism and some of the important developments in early Indian (not to mention Chinese) Mahāyāna. Let me set up three signposts through this maze.

First, I avoid the word "Hīnayāna," which is a pejorative term (meaning "inferior vehicle") coined to advance the innovative teachings of what was coming to be known as the "great vehicle" or Mahāyāna. Since "Hīnayāna" does not occur in what seem to be the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras,[1] and since none of its eighteen (really more than that) schools ever accepts this term, it is better to use a term that the schools in question might have found unobjectionable. I adopt the best term I know of: "'Nikāya' (sectarian) Buddhism," or, for short, "Nikāya Buddhism."[2] *Nikāya* is used here in its sense of a "school" or "sect" that defines itself by allegiance to a particular

1. These tend to use the terms *śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha* to describe non-Mahāyanists under two headings; see, for example, Nattier [2003] 2005, 84–85; *Idem*, 174 n. 6 on Hīnayāna as a "back-formation" of Mahāyāna.

2. See Nattier 1991, 9 n. 1 and *passim*, attributing this usage, without citing a particular work, to Akira Hirakawa.

transmission of the Buddhist monastic rules, and implies reference to the *Vinaya*, the collection or "basket" of texts having to do with monastic discipline.[3] It should not be confused with uses of the same word to describe the five major groupings of the Buddha's dialogues or discourses in the Pāli canon: the *Dīgha-*, *Majjhima-*, *Saṃyutta-*, *Aṅguttara-*, and *Khuddaka-Nikāyas*. To keep the distinction visible, I will put phrases like "Nikāya Buddhism" and "Nikaya schools" in quotes.

The second signpost is already familiar from chapter 2: the Mauryan period, including the watershed reign of Aśoka Maurya, allows us to look in two directions. If the Buddha lived ca. 560–480 BCE, or, according to recent discussions, died around 400 BCE, one has about a century or a little more in which to imagine (it is always engaging to do so, but we must refrain when it comes to particular teachings) what the Buddha might have really said based on what he is said to have said in the earliest texts attributed to him. With regard to individual teachings, there is no consensus as to which texts are the earliest, but it is widely agreed that the major edifice of the earliest Buddhist teachings lies in the first four Nikāya collections and some portions of the fifth, including the *Sutta Nipāta* and the *Dhammapada*. These collections comprise the bulk of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. If altogether they reflect social conditions of about 300 BCE,[4] the period of the early Mauryas, and were given their current shape in that period, this means that the Mauryan period marks the end of about a century or so of undocumentable oral canon formation and launches the beginning of several centuries of diversified documentable canon textualization. But nothing is certain here, as will be noted basket by basket.[5]

The third signpost, which we see emerging here, is that "Nikāya Buddhism" can also be defined by the ways the different schools develop in relation to their notion that the Buddha's teachings are kept in "three baskets" (*piṭakas*) of texts. The organization of a chapter on *dharma* in early Buddhism around the three baskets may look straightforward. I am told, for instance, that Tibetan Buddhists—who have a much vaster canon—still speak of the *dharma* as being like a

3. See Gombrich 1988, 111–12 and *passim*.

4. See Witzel 1997*a*, 307–8, 312, dating Buddhist texts in Pāli to "c. 3rd c. B.C."

5. According to Schmithausen, scholars of early Buddhism have three positions available to them: (*a*) "the fundamental *homogeneity* and substantial *authenticity* of at least a considerable part of the Nikāyik [i.e., *Sutta*] materials . . . yield a fairly coherent picture of the authentic doctrine of the Buddha himself" (1971, 278); (*b*) "extreme skepticism" on that point (cf. Williams 2002, 23–30); and (*c*) that with the tools of higher criticism such as tracing inconsistencies and supposed contradictions, one can detect a relative chronology that may in some cases take one back to the Buddha himself. Schmithausen attributes these positions to Gombrich, Schopen, and himself respectively; see Ruegg and Schmithausen 1990, 1–2. I view the first approach as one of engaging but untestable possibilities; the second as one of testable possibilities; and the third one of wishful thinking, especially as regards the *Sutta Piṭaka*. Favoring epigraphic evidence, Schopen argues that reconstructions of "higher criticism" rely on cross-school parallels that are more likely late than early, and that "we cannot know anything definite about the actual doctrinal content of the *nikāya/āgama* literature much before the fourth century C.E." (1997, 23–30).

three-legged stool, one leg in each basket.[6] But I have not seen Buddhist *dharma* approached elsewhere in this fashion.[7] Although Buddhist tradition holds that five hundred of the Buddha's disciples recalled and arranged the Buddha's Sutta and Vinaya teachings under the names of the Dhamma and Vinaya at the First Buddhist Council shortly after his death, and that the Abhidhamma is likewise the original Word of the Buddha, this grouping, probably including its division of suttas,[8] emerges only gradually and not immediately with any reference to baskets. In the dialogues themselves one hears that the "teaching" (*dhamma*) has nine "parts" (*aṅga*). For instance, in *Majjhima Nikāya* 22, the instructive *Alagaddūpama Sutta* or "The Discourse on the Simile of the Water Snake," the Buddha says, "a monk learns the teaching (*dhammam*)—the discourse[s] (*suttam*), chants (*geyyam*), analyses (*veyyākaraṇam*), verses (*gātham*), utterances (*udānam*), sayings (*itivuttakam*), birth stories (*jātakam*), marvels (*adhbhutadhammam*), and dialogues (*vedallam*)."[9] Although I follow Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi's translation of *suttam* as "discourses," I provide brackets to register that as a singular noun (like all the rest), it most likely refers to the *Pātimokkha Sutta*, the core formulary of the monastic rule—a point of some importance, since it would indicate a foothold for the second basket, the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, in this early *dhamma* classification.[10] Here the Buddha makes the point that these nine types of teaching are to be examined "with wisdom" and not "for the sake of criticizing others and for winning in debates." According to Lamotte (1988, 149–50), reference to three canonical baskets occurs in inscriptions by the second century BCE, their conventionally listed order being the *Sutta* (Sanskrit *Sūtra*) *Piṭaka*, *Vinaya Piṭaka*, and *Abhidhamma* (Sanskrit *Abhidharma*) *Piṭaka*.

These signposts can help us to keep aware of broad developments in the canon formation of the "Nikāya schools." I will organize this chapter around the Three Baskets—but not in the conventional order just mentioned. Rather, proceeding by what I sense to be the emerging consensus of the chronology in which the contents of these baskets filled out into the shape in which we have them, I will move from the Suttas to the Abhidhamma and save the discussion of

6. Thanks on this point to Ani Kunga Chodron and Lama Kalsang Gyaltsen, personal communication, September 2007.

7. Though see Bodhi 2000, 31–36: a valuable discussion of the four chief Nikāya collections; their distinctive features; and their tie-ins with Abhidhamma and Vinaya developments, mentioning throughout their different presentations of the *dhamma*.

8. See Manné 1990, 77–81; Collins 1990; Veidlinger 2006, 18–20. Cf. Bodhi 2000, 30: "It is much more likely that what took place at the First Council was the drafting of a comprehensive scheme for classifying the suttas (preserved only in the memory banks of the monks) and the appointment of *an editorial committee* (perhaps several) to review the material available and cast it into a format conducive to easy memorization and oral transmission" (my italics).

9. *Majjhima Nikāya* [*MN*] 22.10 = M I 133 f. See Lamotte 1988, 144–45.

10. See section C. For a different explanation, see Lamotte 1988, 144.

Vinaya for the last, without ever abandoning the *sutta* texts in either of the latter two cases.[11] To begin with the *Sutta Piṭaka* is to start with the grouping of texts that relates to the expertise of "those who maintain the *Dhamma*": a "*Dhamma*" grouping that refers to the Suttas already in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (*DN* 4.8) on the Buddha's last journey and in *Vinaya* accounts of the two earliest councils, where, in both contexts, *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* are mentioned together as the sum and standard of the Buddha's teachings.[12] To take up the *Abhidhamma* between them is to recognize that, by the time the canon is taking this three-basket design, Buddhism's early scholastics were in the middle of things.

The main reason to present matters around the Three Baskets, however, is to bring out the strikingly different ways that the Buddha's *dharma* was developed in these three areas of specialization. Once one has the three baskets as a way in which to encompass and transmit an understanding of the totality of the Buddha's multifaceted *dharma*, the "three baskets" become "an ideological concept" (Veidlinger 2006, 20, citing Bizot 1976, 21). Whereas the Sūtras (Pāli, Suttas) present the *dharma*'s public face, the other two baskets are in-house specializations. The sūtras present the Buddha dialoguing, telling engaging narratives to all and sundry, and, even when he addresses only his own monastic followers, never speaking, as he puts it, "with a closed fist"—that is, esoterically.[13] This applies to the five main dialogue collections of the Pāli canon, but especially to the *Dīgha Nikāya*, with its preponderance of debates, which "may be regarded as an exercise of publicity, . . . Something is always at stake. . . . [Debates] are the records, slanted no doubt in the Buddha's favour, of public events. They are entertainments for the purpose of propaganda" (Manné 1990, 73). The notion of something "at stake" applies especially to what Manné calls "the dramatic debate," in which many of the opponents are Brahmins, 32.3 percent being "directed

11. On "late" dating of the Vinaya, see Schopen 2006, 316–17; Clarke 2009, 4 n. 7 ("around the turn of the Common Era"). On dating of *Vinaya* relative to the other baskets, see Bodhi 2000, 35 (later than the Sutta Basket); Collins 1993, 335 n. 11 (repeated in Collins 1998, 66 n. 86): "recent evidence is tending to suggest that the version of the [Pāli] *Vinaya* we have is a later redaction, although it too contains no reference to imperial formations." He means not only later than the four and the *Sutta Nipāta*, but apparently "later" than the "always accepted to be late" Abhidhamma. See further. von Hinüber 1996, 3–14, 18–19, 26: "the cultural environment of the first four Nikāyas of the Sutta-piṭaka is markedly older than that of the Vinaya-piṭaka"; 64 on the *Abhidhamma* as "considerably younger" than both. Gombrich 1988, 91, granting some "strong ground" to "modern skepticism," despite his preference for early pre-Mauryan dating of the *Vinaya*; Frauwallner 1956, 154, on the Skandhaka as "the first great literary work of Buddhism"—though attempting to reconstruct an early prototype of it as the "original Vinaya" (see Holt 1983, 41–43, with discussion). On the question of pre-Mauryan *sutta* dating, see the discussion of the *Aggañña Sutta* in § C of this chapter.

12. *Sutta* occurs rather than *Dhamma* in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* standing, "so far as we yet know, quite alone" (see Rhys Davids and Oldenberg [1881] 1968, 1: xxix). See Walshe [1987] 1995, 255.

13. "But Ānanda, what does the order of monks expect of me? I have taught the Dhamma, Ānanda, making no 'inner' and 'outer': the Tathāgata has no 'teacher's fist' in respect of doctrines" (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* [*DN* 16] 2.5; Walshe trans. [1987] 1995, 245).

toward" them (45–57, 79). We shall discuss one of the most dramatic of these in the next section, the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* (DN 3). *The Dīgha Nikāya* also has most of the "magical" (79) and what have been called "mythical" (Gethin 2006, 68 n. 15) suttas.[14] Such public outreach also seems to typify "new" texts included in the sūtra baskets of the northern "Nikāya schools" (see chapter 7 § B for an example), and quite clearly applies to Mahāyāna sūtras, which used the sūtra format to authorize and disseminate new teachings as the Buddha's Word. In sharp contrast, the Abhidharma and Vinaya are each almost totally for those in the movement. The Abhidharma refines what those really in the know should know. And the Vinaya defines what monks and nuns should (and should not) do in common. Yet these two approaches also have their wider public purviews: the Abhidharma in staking out Buddhism's place in the erudite but politically important settings—sometimes including royal courts—of scholastic debate with other Indian philosophies; and the Vinaya in regulating the public interface between Buddhist and non-Buddhist *dharmas* in practice. Coming to the *Vinaya* last will best equip us by the end of this chapter to understand the ways these three baskets bring together varied and overlapping teachings and set the terms for a discussion of Buddhism's treatment of the *dharma* over time in chapter 6. It will also enable us to consider certain Mahāyāna departures from "Nikāya Buddhism," and to take stock of the complexities that distinguish Buddhist and Brahmanical senses of *dharma* before beginning to size up the latter in chapter 5.

A. *Sūtra* Basket *Dharma*

The most accessible Sūtra Basket comes from the only Nikāya school to have compiled its canonical scriptures in Pāli rather than Sanskrit: the Theravāda or School of the Elders, which takes root in Sri Lanka. The Pāli equivalent of Sanskrit *sūtra* is *sutta*.

While the *Sutta Piṭaka* includes a number of discourses noteworthy for their basic instructional content, including the Buddha's famous first sermon known as

14. Gethin mentions eleven of the *Dīgha Nikāya*'s thirty-four *suttas* as being more "mythic" than the others, including the *Aggañña Sutta*, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter. Manné demonstrates the *DN*'s public feature in contrast to the other of the two "'story tellers' collections" (1990, 70), the *Majjhima Nikāya*, with its higher proportion of sermons and consultations (73–75), in which "60.5% are directed only to monks," and in which the "purpose [is] the presentation of the Leader, both as a real person and as an archetupe (a Tathāgata), and the integration of new monks into the community and the practice. Most of the intimate biographical suttas appear in this collection" (80–81). Cf. Bodhi 2000, 31; 2005, 11–12, building on Manné's contribution, and Bodhi 2000, 334 on the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, open to "the conventional world of consensual realities" and presenting people "engaged in a heartfelt quest for happiness and freedom from suffering." Cf. Bronkhorst 1985*a*, 316, on the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* arranging matters "subject wise" and the *Aṅguttara* following "a scheme determined by the number of subdivisions in the items discussed."

"The Turning of the Wheel Sutta," it also includes many elegant dialogues famous as narratives, some of which, as noted, can be called myths.[15] Such narratives often portray the Buddha in interactive settings where his artful teachings, graced with maieutic ethical and philosophical reasoning and backed by stunning similes, have their maximum impact. We will open this basket by beginning with suttas of this type and save discussion of more directly instructional or catechetical teachings for the next section on Abhidhamma, where we can examine how they served as the basis for further instructional unfolding. The interactive settings can direct our initial focus to the likely historical background that the Suttas reflect. We will look especially at the Buddha's interactions with kings and others deemed members of the Khattiya (Sanskrit Kṣatriya) social class; with Brahmins and members of the lowest social classes; and with householders and his monastic followers.

Keeping in mind Olivelle's hypothesis linking *dharma* and royalty,[16] let us turn first to the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* (*DN* 3), in which the Buddha raises the matter of his royal descent while describing the Sakyans, the clan from which he comes, as Khattiyas (Kṣatriyas), and saying that "the Sakyans regard King Okkāka as their ancestor" (*DN* 3.1.15; Walshe trans. [1987] 1995, 114). Pāli "Okkāka" is equivalent to Sanskrit "Ikṣvāku." The Ikṣvākus, it will be recalled, are the royal clan of Kosala. Along with the kings of Videha (such as Janaka) further to the east, they had formed "the new political center in eastern North India" (Witzel 1997*a*, 307) that backed the third and last main phase of Vedic canonization. We have discussed the late Vedic texts that were composed in this milieu. It is now in the same area that we find the Buddha claiming that his clan has Kṣatriya ancestry going back to the eponymous ancestor of the Ikṣvāku line, if not further, to the first Khattiya, Mahāsammata, to whom the Buddha traces the origin of kingship in the *Aggañña Sutta* (*DN* 3.27.20–21).[17] But although it is the same area, linguistic (Caillat 1997, 26 and *passim*), social, and political considerations point to a "gap" of as many as two hundred years[18] between the Vedic texts and the conditions portrayed in the Nikāyas. Both the older tribes of the area and the

15. Among the eleven Gethin 2005, 68 n. 15 mentions in the DN are many that I will mention briefly, including the *Cakkavattisīhanāda* and the *Mahāsudasana*, on which he is writing.

16. Olivelle says *dharma* was "a natural choice to define the new dispensation" of Buddhism because of its royal associations: "My hypothesis is that the Buddha borrowed *dharma* as he did many other symbols to locate and articulate his new religion. . . . The Buddha's doctrine is compared to a wheel, a metonym for the war chariot and conquest; and his first sermon is . . . 'the Sūtra that set the wheel of *dharma* rolling.' The Buddha's teaching is *śāsana*, the counterpart of a royal edict. These are . . . royal symbols used, deliberately I think, to define a new ascetic group and a new religious ideology" (2004*a*, 504). As Holt points out too, "justification for viewing the Buddha's authority in terms of royal sovereignty" also has to do his being the one who "rules over the religious life according to the norms of his *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*" (1983, 52).

17. According to Walshe 1995, 605 n. 838, Mahāsammata is "the first king of the solar race and ancestor, among others, of the Sakyan rulers (and hence of Gotama)." Cf. Strong 2010.

18. See above, n. 4. According to Witzel, the Pāli texts "tell us that the area was inhabited not just by the Kosala-Videhas but by a large number of tribes." "The important Vedic tribe of the Videha thus is only one and not a particularly prominent member of the Vajji confederation."

ones that have recently immigrated there have by now established themselves as new polities with varied social systems, from monarchic to oligarchic.[19] A "fully developed town civilization" has emerged. And most important, the second urbanization of India is now in full swing with aggressive metropolitan states not only in Kosala, ruled by King Pasenadi, but in Kosala's looming rival Magadha (barely mentioned in the Vedic texts) under Kings Seniya Bimbisāra and his son Ajātasattu—all contemporaries of the Buddha.[20] The Buddha can compare the discovering of the *dhamma* to finding an ancient path to an old and forgotten city (*Nidānasaṃyutta*, *Saṃyutta Nikāya* [*SN*] 104–7).[21]

The *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* can be read with these "melting pot" conditions as background. Its ambivalent portrayal of King Okkāka and his line are flavored with contending Brahmanical and Buddhist views on caste and kingship, some of which would seem to have been simmering for a long time. The Ikṣvākus "may go back all the way to those once mentioned in the *Rigveda* (10.60.4), who may have descended from the royal family of the Pūru tribe," with some of them moving eastward after the Pūrus' defeat in the Battle of the Ten Kings. But in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, the Kuru-Pañcālas look down upon the Ikṣvākus to their east as a "despised and down-trodden" tribe that had eaten Asura food (Witzel 1997*a*, 279 n. 93, 318–19). As to the Śakyas, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* includes them among "easterners and others" who have round Asuric graves, which may be precursors of the Buddhist *stūpa* (Ibid., 310). Even as an ancestor of the Sakyas, King Okkāka/Ikṣvāku gets a rather ambivalent portrayal in early Buddhist sources as the presumed eponym of the Buddha's own line. In the *Sutta Nipāta*, often considered as supplying early *sutta* material, one learns that it was under Okkāka's reign that the degeneration of Brahminhood was brought about by the institution of animal sacrifice.[22] In the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, the line going back to the first king Mahāsammata has degenerated and is

19. "The many tribes well known from the Pāli texts, such as the Sakya, Malla, Vajji, Licchavi, Naya, Kalāma, Buli, Moriya, Vesali, etc. do not (yet) appear in the eastern Vedic texts" (Witzel 1997*a*, 308).

20. See Witzel 1997*a*, 308–9 (the second urbanization gets truly underway ca. 450 BCE), 318, 321, 329, 333–34.

21. This passage would seem to be reminiscent of the city Kusāvati, where the Buddha in a previous life once lived as king Mahāsudassana, dying there in its "Dhamma Palace" (*dhamma-pāsāda*), which he tells Ānanda about as he prepares to die at the forlorn town of Kusinārā, where Kusāvati once stood, in the *Mahāsudassana Sutta* (*DN* 17; cf. *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* [*DN* 16] 5.17–18). On this Dhamma Palace as a place for death in meditation, structured cosmologically as a seven-ringed city horizontally and vertically as the *rūpadhātu* (world of form) in which to practice the four Brahmavihāras (the "sublime attitudes" of friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity), see Gethin 2005, 74–76, 80, 88–93.

22. See Bodhi 2000, 171–72, 402 n. 214. In this note to *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 3.9, where the Buddha describes five "great sacrifices" (*mahāyañña*), including the Aśvamedha, Rājasūya, and Vājapeya, which "great seers" should not attend, Bodhi cites the commentary on *Sutta Nipāta* 299–305, which describes the origin of these rites as follows: "in the time of the ancient kings the first four sacrifices were actually the four bases of beneficence (*saṅgahavatthu*)—giving, pleasant speech, beneficent conduct, and equality of treatment—by means of which kings conferred benefits on the world. But during the time of king Okkāka the brahmins reinterpreted the bases of beneficence (which they augmented to five) as bloody sacrifices involving slaughter and violence." Cf. Tsuchida 1991, 93 n. 57 on Okkāka, and 87 on these five implicitly Vedic sacrifices—on which see further Falk 1988.

about to die out when the son of the last king, falsely accused of murdering a prostitute, is dying on an impalement stake; then two drops of his semen mingled with blood fall from his body and, warmed by the sun, give birth to twin boys who get the name Ikṣvāku because they take refuge in a sugarcane thicket (*ikṣu-vāta*), with the younger twin eventually becoming king under this name (Strong 2009, 48–49; 2010). In fact, Ikṣvāku does not fare much better in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which celebrates the "house of Ikṣvāku" (*ikṣvāku-kula*, *-vaṃśa*) that puts his name at the source of Rāma's lineage, but does not say much about Ikṣvāku himself.[23] If Okkāka is the best claim the Sakyas have to royal descent, then that also could be reflected in the charge made by the leading Brahmins in the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* that their rank among Kṣatriyas is tenuous at best. But similar ambiguities pertain to what the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* has the Buddha say about the origins of the regional "Kaṇhāyan" Brahmins.

The *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* thus gives voice to various challenges that, according to the Nikāyas, the Buddha is alleged to have put to proponents of Vedic orthopraxy. It can thus serve to introduce some of the complexities of that challenge, which is, of course, the challenge of the Buddhist *dhamma* specifically to Brahmins, who, as Gombrich has noted, are among the Buddha's more frequent "interlocutors in the Canon."[24] Indeed, we should note that the Buddha seems to have expected more from his dialogues with Brahmins than he did from those at the lower end of the social spectrum. In the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* (*MN* 22), when the Buddha says the nine "parts" of the *dhamma* are to be examined "with wisdom" and not to win debating points, he is correcting an errant "bhikkhu named Ariṭṭha, formerly of the vulture killers," who has been caught misrepresenting the teaching with his claim that what the Buddha has called "obstructions" (which include sensual desires) do not obstruct the person who engages in them—that is, including sexual intercourse! The Buddha admonishes Ariṭṭha and the other assembled monks: "Bhikkhus, that one can engage in sensual pleasures (*kāma*) without sensual desires (*kāma*), without perceptions of sensual desire, without thoughts of sensual desire—that is impossible." From this topic he turns to the simile of the water snake: that when one needs a snake, it makes all the difference whether one grasps it wrongly or rightly. Without precisely saying so, the Buddha thus compares the *dhamma* to a snake (no cigars yet) before going on to make his famous simile that the *dhamma* is like a raft—"for the

23. After Manu built Ayodhyā (1.5.6), Ikṣvāku, as Manu's son (2.102.6), was given the (in itself rather small; see Pollock 1984, 402–3) land of Kosala (2.43.11), where it is by Ikṣvāku's "grace" that "all the great kings of Viśāla are long-lived, mighty, and righteous" (1.46.18). Viśāla, a second city of Kosala founded by Ikṣvāku's son Viśāla (1.46.11–12), is Vaisali in Buddhist sources.

24. See Gombrich 1984, 98; Schumann 1989, 187–93; Bailey and Mabbett 2003, 112, 121–29, 134–37, 252, 261.

purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping"—that you leave behind when you get to the other shore. Now as Schumann observes, "It is noteworthy that it was always monks of casteless origin whom the Master had to reprove for misinterpretations"; "It is noteworthy that in both cases the Canon mentions the humble origin of the monks so blamed. It seems that Gotama expected men of no education to have ethical qualities, but not much power of understanding" (1989, 188; 205). The second reference is to "Sāti, son of a fisherman," who also had a "pernicious view" (*MN* 38). In effect, by calling attention to their outcaste *jātis* or "births," the Buddha was practicing *jāti* profiling.[25]

The *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* [henceforth *AmbS*] runs the gamut on these matters, but it is a dialogue with Brahmins. The best discussion of it I know of, by Ryūtarō Tsuchida, places it in that context, and brings out two things to keep in mind. First, as Tsuchida shows, although it is not possible to draw from the Buddhist canon an "exact and comprehensive categorization" of different types of Brahmins, "at least two main groups" are repeatedly delineated: "wealthy Vedic masters living in villages and towns," the most prominent of whom are called *brāhmaṇamahāsāla*, "Brahmins having great halls"; and ascetics with matted hair called *jaṭilā*. The *AmbS* presents one of the exemplary Brahmins of the great halls, but it also, as we shall see, describes Brahmin ascetics (Tsuchida 1991, 53–54, 60, 90). Secondly, Tsuchida shows that the "longer" *suttas* of the *Dīgha* and *Majjhima Nikāyas* "do not have so much the character of historical records as that of literary frameworks, into which doctrinal materials can be incorporated as the main theme of each particular Sutta." (1991, 77). They thus make the task of recognizing Brahmin types easier by deploying "stock-phrases," "formulae," "stereotypical expressions," and "fixed prose passages."[26] Yet even while they run their characters through such central casting scripts, these "Sutta authors display their literary skill by giving us lively portraits of particular Brahmins" (53–54)—ones whose individuality emerges precisely through and beyond the stereotypes. As we see the Buddha engaging the lead Brahmin characters of the *AmbS*, let us compound our attention to the ambiguities of caste and kingship with an open question: where is the *dhamma* in this text?

25. For a more somewhat more sympathetic reading of these usages, and also citing many others, see Parasher-Sen 2006, 441.

26. Tsuchida 1991, 77, goes on to mention that the *brāhmaṇamahāsāla* Jāṇussoṇi is converted in six different suttas, each time by a different sermon of the Buddha! Cf. Manné 1990, 71, 78, carefully speaking "of (oral) literature" and also of "the strict literary style" (82) of *DN* and *MN* suttas, while earlier citing in full the "formulas" by which to recognize debates, consultations, and sermons in them, many of which we now meet in the *AmbS*. For me, granted that there are always questions about prior orality and continued oral usages, the literary character of the *DN* and *MN* suttas, as we have them, is, at least for the ones I discuss, a given.

The Buddha is touring Kosala with some five hundred monks and stays near a Kosalan Brahmin village. A Brahmin named Pokkharasāti[27] lives there at a populous and well-stocked "handsome estate" (Tsuchida 1991, 56) named Ukkaṭṭha that has been given to him by King Pasenadi of Kosala as a "royal gift and with royal powers (*rājadāyaṃ brahmadeyam*)."[28] As Tsuchida indicates, the practice of giving such estates to Brahmins "suggests the close relationship of Brahmin landownership with royal power."[29] It appears from Pokkharasāti's mention in several of the Buddha's dialogues with Brahmins that his "authority and reputation . . . were not restricted to his native region of Kosala but extended throughout the Brahmin society of northeastern India."[30]

Pokkharasāti has heard a "good report" about Gotama: among other things, that he is "a fully enlightened Buddha" and that he "teaches a Dhamma that is lovely in its beginning, lovely in its middle, and lovely in its ending." He sends his pupil Ambaṭṭha to find out about the good report,[31] and to test whether Gotama is a Great Man by seeing if he has the thirty-two physical marks that,

27. According to Malalasekera [1937] 1983, 2: 247, Sutta commentaries tell of his celestial hue and features, and that in the time of the Buddha Kassapa he was a Brahmin "versed in the three Vedas who, having heard the doctrine and given alms, was reborn in the deva-world. Thereafter, scorning birth in the womb of a woman, he sprang to life in a lotus" in a Himalayan pond. An ascetic found him and taught him the Vedas, and the king gave him his estate because of his Vedic learning. The lotus birth gives him his name, which in the Sanskrit *Divyāvadāna* is Puṣkarasārin, "Having the Essence of the Lotus."

28. According to Walshe ([1987] 1995, 548 n. 141), who draws on an earlier translation, this stock phrase means that the "royal gift" allows him to rule over it "as if he were a king."

29. See Tsuchida 1991, 57, preceded by a table of seventeen *brahmadeyya-s* and/or *brāhmaṇagāma-s* mentioned in the Nikāyas, with eleven in Kosala, four in Magadha, one in Aṅga, and one in Malla (56–57). Such estates seem to have populations consisting mostly of other castes. The prominence of these Brahmans "seems to owe itself primarily to authority they held within society as orthodox vedic masters and ritual priests" (57). Cf. the concern in Brahmanical *dharma* texts over the inviolability of Brahman property, to be discussed in chapter 5.

30. Tsuchida 1991, 55. As Tsuchida brings out, he is "the most prominent and authoritative figure" among the five *brāhmaṇamahāsālā* in the "Kosala group" of five such persons (54; see *Subha Sutta* (*MN*) 99.13; *Tevijja Sutta* (*DN*) 13.2). The five include Caṅkī and the interesting Jāṇussoṇi, who, at the end of the *Subha Sutta*, gets off his fancy chariot in public view to salute—from what he has just learned second-hand of the Buddha's teaching—the gain it brings to King Pasenadi that a fully enlightened Tathāgata dwells in his realm (*MN* 99.30; cf. *MN* 27.8). This public avowal has its opposite in the request by the freshly converted Brahmin Soṇadaṇḍa that the Buddha not take it amiss if, instead of alighting from his chariot to salute him in public, for which "he will surely incur the reproach of the (Brahmin) assembly," he merely raise his goad (*DN* 4.26). See Tsuchida 1991, 76–77, who notes of this assembly (*parisā*; Sanskrit *pariṣad*) that "perhaps it refers to some kind of assembly presided over by eminent Brahmins" [93 n. 65]). Cf. the five *mahāśāla* Brahmins who hear the teachings of King Aśvapati Kaikeya at *ChU* 5.11.1, mentioned in chapter 3 § F. That *mahāśāla* Brahmins of the Kosala group could serve as court chaplains is indicated by the *Majjhima Nikāya* commentary, which, according to Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2005, 1174 n. 56, says of Jāṇussoṇi that his name "was not a given name but an honorific title meaning 'royal chaplain' (*purohita*) bestowed on him by the king."

31. One might, however, also infer from *MN* 99.10 (*Subha Sutta*) that, more than just wanting to validate the "good report," Pokkharasāti has an axe to grind, for he is represented there as thinking that the claims of some Brahmins and recluses to reach superhuman states and "distinctions in knowledge and visions worthy of the noble ones" are "ridiculous."

"according to the tradition of our mantras,"[32] indicate that he would have had the choice of becoming either "a wheel-turning righteous monarch of the law" (*dhammarāja*) or a "fully enlightened Buddha" (1.5). Young Ambaṭṭha is a "student of the Vedas, who knows the mantras," and fully shares his master's knowledge. So far, virtually everything has been stock material, paralleled in other suttas, and so it will continue, leaving us little need for further such notices except where something distinctive begins to happen, as it does now.

Soon invited into the Buddha's dwelling, Ambaṭṭha shows discourtesy by walking and standing rather than sitting like his seated host. Asked would he behave like this if he were talking to venerable and learned Brahmins, he says, "No, Reverend Gotama. . . . A Brahmin should walk with a walking Brahmin, . . . sit with a sitting Brahmin. . . . But as for those shaven little ascetics, menials, black scourings from Brahmā's foot, with them it is fitting to speak just as I do with the Reverend Gotama" (1.10). Ambaṭṭha's ultimate proof text is obviously meant to be an implied but also modified *Puruṣa Sūkta* with Brahmā in place of Puruṣa,[33] such as occurs similarly in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4, where, as we have seen (see chapter 3 § F), the four social classes emerge along with *dharma* as part of the "full development" of *brahman*.

It will be left hanging whether young Ambaṭṭha ever changes his views on these insulting matters, but the *Caṅkī Sutta* ends with the young scholarly Brahmin Kāpaṭhika drawing the right lesson on the same subject: "Formerly, Master Gotama, we used to think: 'Who are these bald-pated recluses, these swarthy menial offspring of the Kinsman's [Brahmā's] feet, that they would understand the Dhamma?' But Master Gotama has indeed inspired in me love for recluses, confidence in recluses, reverence for recluses" (*MN* 95.34; Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2005, 785). The Buddha has engaged Kāpaṭhika even after he has repeatedly interrupted the Buddha, and been defended by Caṅkī as a very learned and wise young scholar with whom the Buddha ought still to engage in discussion, to which the Buddha agrees (*MN* 95.11–12). For present purposes, let me just introduce a point that will bear further unfolding. In several of the *suttas* in which the Buddha holds dialogues with Brahmins, there comes a point where one or more senior Brahmins turn matters over to a junior Brahmin

32. See *DN* 30 and Walshe 610–11 n. 939 positing that although the thirty-two marks "clearly must have been important in the minds of influential Brahmins in the time of the Buddha, . . . Brahmin tradition has preserved very little about them."

33. See *MN* 50.13, where Māra Dūsi puts such thoughts into Brahmins' minds by possessing them to oppose the monks (*bhikkhus*) or recluses (*samaṇas*), and Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2005, 1251 n. 524, providing the commentarial explanation that "it was the belief among the brahmins that they were themselves the offspring of Brahmā's mouth, the *khattiyas* of his *breast*, the *vessas* of his belly, the *suddas* of his legs, and the *samaṇas* of the soles of his feet." Other than the Brahmins holding place at the mouth, everything else is centrally (breast rather than arms) or upwardly (belly rather than thighs, legs rather than feet) displaced to make room for the fifth group at rock bottom.

pupil to match wits with the Buddha.[34] From the standpoint of such *suttas*, it is as if the senior Brahmins unwittingly or inadvertently put the Buddha in a position to test the depth of the young men's Vedic education, which, of course, always comes up somewhat short. Indeed, in some of these cases one could compare him to an initiation master. The point that bears watching, however, is that even though the Buddhist texts do not offer a precise designation of the status of these young men, it would appear that they are proximate to a type that Brahmanical *dharma* texts call the *snātaka* or "bath graduate": the postgraduate twice-born male, but especially Brahmin, who has undergone the sacred bath that marks the completion of his Vedic education, after which he may remain in an intermediate celibate state until marriage, or can even continue to be called a *snātaka* after marriage.[35] As Tsuchida shows, Buddhist canonical texts have the equivalent word *n(a)hātaka*, though it "does not occur very frequently." But its usages emphasize "scholarly rather than priestly aspects of the Brahmin" as "a virtual synonym" for *sottiya* or "vedic scholar" (Sanskrit *śrotriya*) and *tevijja* or one who has knowledge of the three Vedas (Sanskrit *traividya*), which the Pāli texts use more frequently (1991, 70–71).

Ambaṭṭha's Vedic education is thus being made subject to a Buddhist examination. And when the Buddha replies to him that his training should have made him more courteous and Ambaṭṭha hears himself "being called untrained," he angrily explains himself by insulting the Sakyans as "menials" no less than three more times, of which the second is the most interesting. When the Buddha asks what the Sakyans have done to Ambaṭṭha that he should so insult them, Ambaṭṭha has a story. Once he went to Kapilavatthu, the Sakyans' capital,[36] on some business for Pokkharasāti, and while the Sakyans were "laughing and playing about together" on "the high seats in their meeting hall," no one offered him a seat. The Buddha passes this off as "a trifle," saying, "But Ambaṭṭha, even the quail, that little bird, can talk as she likes in her own nest. Kapilavatthu is the Sakyans' home." Although Ambaṭṭha never denies that the Sakyans are

34. In *Assalāyana Sutta* (*MN* 93), the scholarly sixteen-year-old Assalāyana is promoted by the Brahmins to dispute the Buddha on "purification for all the four castes." In *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta* (*DN* 4) 20–22, Soṇadaṇḍa upholds his young nephew Aṅgaka as an exemplary young scholar and pupil to make a point about wisdom and morality that the Buddha applauds. And in *Brahmāyu Sutta* (*MN* 91) 4–22, the young student Uttara shadows the Buddha on behalf of his aged preceptor Brahmāyu, the leading householder Brahmin of Mithilā (27). In several *sutta* narratives without this explicit frame of senior Brahmin(s) putting forward a junior one, the Buddha also discourses with Pokkharasāti's pupils (Tsuchida 1991, 55): see *Vāseṭṭha Sutta* (*MN* 98), *Tevijja Sutta* (*DN* 13), and *Aggañña Sutta* (*DN* 27), discussed at this chapter's end, all dialogues with the young Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja; and *Subha Sutta* (*MN* 99) with the young Subba, which, like the *Tevijja*, treats the four *brahmavihāras* as the way to Brahmā. The fatherless "young householder" Sigālaka, who receives the Buddhas instruction on "the right way to pay homage to the six directions," is also presumably a Brahmin in *Sigālaka Sutta* (*DN* 31).

35. See Tsuchida 1991 70–72. "Bath graduate" is Olivelle's 1999 and 2005*a* translation of *snātaka*.

36. And near the Buddha's birthplace at Lumbinī.

Khattiyas, the net effect is that he denounces them as crude ones who "do not pay homage to Brahmins" as menials should (3.1.12–14).

Saying, "This young man goes too far in abusing the Sakyans," the Buddha tells him not only that "the Sakyans regard King Okkāka as their ancestor," but, turning the tables, that Ambaṭṭha's own Brahmin clan descends from one of Okkāka's slave girls (*dāsis*). As Bronkhorst has demonstrated, the name Ambaṣṭha almost certainly references the Ambaṭṭhas, one of the "mixed-caste" groups enumerated in most of the *dharmasūtras* and *Manu*, which agree that "Ambaṣṭhas were thought of as descendants of a mixed marriage in which the father belonged to a higher class than the mother, the father most typically being a Brahmin, the mother a Vaiśya" (2007, 355). In fact, the only *dharmasūtra* not to mention Ambaṭṭhas in this way is the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, for which, as Olivelle points out, one of the signs that it is earlier than the rest is that it "does not deal with mixed classes at all, a topic found in all other Dharmasūtras and in the later Smṛtis" (1999, xxxi; cf. Jha 1970). This reinforces Bronkhorst's evidence that the naming of Ambaṭṭha as this *sutta*'s chief interlocutor would be "late" (by which he seems to mean later than Alexander the Great [2007, 353]), and that its author would have chosen this name because "cultivated early listeners to the story would know, right from the beginning, that Ambaṭṭha was not what he claimed to be, viz., a pure-blooded Brahmin. They would know immediately that he was an empty boaster" (355). Indeed, among Bronkhorst's reasons to include the *AmbS* in a discussion of "late" *suttas* is its link with the other two *suttas* mentioned above about students of Pokkarasāti (353–54). Note that in contrast to the *AmbS*, the two others give names of the highest Brahmin and indeed Vedic pedigree to the two young Brahmins who, unlike Ambaṭṭha, will become the Buddha's disciples. Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja would be descendants of the great Vedic poets Vasiṣṭha and Bhāradvāja![37] Here the Buddha is not so much *jāti* profiling as he is staying ahead of the Brahmins' game.

Three times the Buddha presses Ambaṭṭha to admit that he too has heard about his clan's mixed origins from learned Brahmins (3.1.15–21), finally backing his persuasion with a threat that if Ambaṭṭha does not answer the third posing, his head will split into seven pieces, which is reinforced by the Yakkha Vajirapāni, whom both of them see holding an iron club in midair and ready to strike.[38] But now, hearing Ambaṭṭha censured by his own companions, the Buddha pulls back. Not wanting these young men to humiliate Ambaṭṭha further, he allows

37. Bronkhorst also calls attention to the location of the Ambaṣṭhas "among the western people conquered by Nakula" in the *Mbh* (2007, 355, citing *Mbh* 2.29.6 and 19) as evidence "that the author or inventor of this Buddhist story had heard of" a people that "lived far to the west of the area where the Buddha taught" (355–56). The *AmbS* has them come from the south.

38. One might hold this incident in mind for chapter 9's discussion of "the Yakṣa's Questions."

that the slave-girl's son Kaṇha[39] "was a mighty sage" (Isi, Sanskrit Ṛṣi) who "went to the south country, learnt the mantras of the Brahmins there, and then went to King Okkāka and asked for his daughter"; when the outraged Okkāka readied his bow and arrow, the sage was able to put a spell on the weapons until Okkāka, fearing divine punishment (*brahmadaṇḍa*), relented and gave the "mighty sage" his daughter (22–23). As if invoking Brahmanical Law, the Buddha then takes up two cases of intercaste marriages and one of banishment from caste to demonstrate, on highly dubious Brahmanical grounds,[40] that Khattiyas are higher than Brahmins. And in summation, he twice quotes a verse "pronounced by Brahmā Sanatkumāra": "The Khattiya's best among those who value clan; He with knowledge and conduct is best of gods and men."[41] The two lines of the saying are clearly contrastive in juxtaposing what is "best" for two different audiences: those who value clan and those who follow the teachings on "knowledge and conduct" which characterize those on the Buddhist path.[42] The speaker of this verse, who is also its source in the *Aggañña Sutta*, is not the "creator" Brahmā but one of his five sons called "Forever Young."[43] As mentioned above, there too the Buddha is also talking to Pokkharasāti's young pupils.

For the first time, Ambaṭṭha is drawn into questioning: "But, Reverend Gotama, what is this conduct, what is this knowledge?" The Buddha reveals first what they are not. They are not concerned with reputation based on birth and clan or the conceit of giving and taking in marriage; rather, they are declared "from the standpoint of the attainment of unexcelled knowledge-and-conduct" that comes from "abandoning all such things" (3.2.1). So Ambaṭṭha asks again, "But, Reverend Gotama, what is this conduct, what is this knowledge?"

39. The name was given because the baby was "black" (3.1.16). Walshe [1987] 1995, 549 n. 152 asks, "Is he to be identified with Krishna?" There is no *narrative* basis for an identification with either Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva or, more plausibly since he is a great Ṛṣi, Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana, author of the *Mahābhārata*.

40. Should a male Khattiya marry a Brahmin female, or the reverse, Brahmins would give their son a seat, teach him mantras, and not cover their women before him; but Khattiyas would not give him their Khattiya consecration. A banished Brahmin would not be received by Brahmins but a banished Khattiya would (this case seems to be fallacious, since, although the Buddha asks whether Brahmins would teach a banished Brahmin mantras, and hears "no," he does not ask whether they would teach mantras to a banished Khattiya).

41. *AmbS* 3.1.24–28. In this, the Buddha moves not only from Brahmins to Kṣatriyas as the standard of orthopraxy, but to *dharma* as a teaching of what is best for the full range of human society and the world. Beyond this *sutta*, Kṣatriyas not only set the standard in the oligarchic polity which the Buddha nostalgically favors but in the emerging reality of monarchical states.

42. The *AmbS* is third among the first thirteen *suttas* in the *DN*, each of which, according to Gombrich (1984, 91–133), has a section on *sīla* or conduct, meaning "decorum." In the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta*, the fourth and next in sequence, the Buddha puts *sīla* on a par with *paññа* or wisdom, and has also been talking about both together in the *AmbS*.

43. See Walshe [1987] 1995, 580 n. 516. According to the *Majjhima Nikāya* commentary, he "was a youth who attained *jhāna*, passed away, and was reborn in the Brahma-world, retaining the same handsome form he possessed in his existence in the human world" (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2005, 1255 n. 566). This same verse is quoted and approved by the Buddha at the conclusion of the *Aggañña Sutta* (*DN* 27.33). See Collins 1993, 349, 378–79 and discussion later in this chapter.

> Ambaṭṭha, a Tathāgata arises in this world an Arahant, fully-enlightened Buddha, endowed with wisdom and conduct, Well-Farer, Knower of the worlds, incomparable Trainer of men to be tamed, Teacher of gods and humans, enlightened and blessed. . . . He preaches the Dhamma which is lovely in the beginning, lovely in its middle, lovely in its ending, in the spirit and the letter, and displays the fully perfected and purified holy life. *A disciple goes forth and practices the moralities; he guards the sense doors, etc.; attains the four jhānas. Thus he develops conduct. He attains various insights and the cessation of the corruptions. . . .*[44] And beyond this there is no further development of knowledge and conduct that is higher or more perfect. (2.2)

The Buddha adds, however, that there are "four paths of failure"[45] along which ascetics (*samaṇas*) or Brahmins fail "in pursuit of this unexcelled attainment of knowledge and conduct." According to Tsuchida, this grouping of four seems to sort out ascetics and Brahmins according to the types and locations of their hermitages or *assamas* (Sanskrit *āśramas*), although that word does not occur. The third category, the ascetic or Brahmin who "builds himself a fire-shrine on the outskirts of some village or town and dwells there tending his sacred fires" (2.3; Tsuchida trans. 1991, 85), strikes Tsuchida as a likely approximation, on the Brahmin side, of the matted hair *jaṭila* ascetics, who are similarly depicted in other canonical sources (Ibid.). After hearing of these four in the order of their decreasing austerity, Ambaṭṭha has to admit that he and his teacher not only fall short of the highest standard of "unexcelled knowledge and conduct" but are incapable of undertaking any of the "four paths of failure," down even to the easiest! "And yet," replies the Buddha, "you and your teacher the Brahmin Pokkharasāti utter these words: 'These shaven little ascetics, menials, black scrapings of Brahmā's foot, what converse can they have with Brahmins learned in the Three Vedas?'—even though you can't even manage the duties of one who has failed. See, Ambaṭṭha, how your teacher has let you down!" (2.5). Although we were told that Ambaṭṭha "fully shares his master's knowledge," this is the first we hear that the abusive words were his teacher's as well as his. Says Tsuchida, although the four hermit types are "pitiable people" from the standpoint of their following knowledge and practices that the Buddhist path excels, still, "the attitude of these canonical authors towards Brahmanical hermits is not entirely degrading" since "at least they are more highly esteemed than mahāsāla-Brahmins" such as Pokkharasāti (1991, 85).

44. The italics and ellipsis indicate abridged allusions to the longer teachings in the preceding *sutta*, the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (= *DN* 2). See Walshe [1987] 1995, 549 n. 157.

45. Walshe [1987] 1995, 119–20; literally "outlets of loss" or "leakages" (Ibid., 549 n. 158; Tsuchida 1991, 85).

The Buddha now tells how Pokkharasāti lives opulently "by the grace and favour of King Pasenadi of Kosala," yet confers with the king only through a curtain rather than face to face (3.2.6)—which, the Buddha need not mention, is the way *he* converses with King Pasenadi.[46] And he gets Ambaṭṭha to agree that, just as "some workman or workman's servant" cannot stand in place of the king and speak for him, so the present-day Brahmins, with their opulence, amusements with women, and fortified towns, are not like "the first sages of the Brahmins,[47] the makers and expounders of the mantras whose ancient verses are chanted, pronounced and collected[48] by the Brahmins of today" (3.2.6–10). As Tsuchida observes, the *AmbS* puts this "neutral" stock unit on the ancient vedic Ṛṣis and their mantras to a rather favorable depiction here of the sages as having none of the ostentation of their current-day *mahāsāla* successors, whereas in other suttas the Buddha puts the same Ṛṣis at the head of "a procession of the blind" (*andhaveṇi*) that runs from the "first generation of vain and ignorant Brahmins" down to those with whom he is speaking.[49]

Possibly holding back on such a negative evaluation, the Buddha now gives his dialogue with Ambaṭṭha its final turn. Telling Ambaṭṭha that neither he nor his teacher is "a sage or one trained in the way of a sage," he says he will clarify Ambaṭṭha's "doubts and perplexities" concerning his person and answer his questions. Descending from his lodging, he starts to walk with Ambaṭṭha, and, aware that Ambaṭṭha sees all but two of his thirty-two marks, he "effected by his psychic power that he could see his sheathed genitals, and then, sticking out his tongue, he reached out to lick both ears and both nostrils, and then covered the whole circle of his forehead with his tongue."[50] Finding all the marks accounted for and considering his mission accomplished, Ambaṭṭha asks leave and returns to Pokkharasāti, whom he finds "sitting in his park with a large number of Brahmins, just waiting for Ambaṭṭha" (3.2.10–13). First, Ambaṭṭha reports that the Buddha has "the thirty-two marks of a Great Man, all complete, with nothing missing." Then he recounts their conversation, upon which Pokkharasāti exclaims, "Well, you're a fine little scholar," berates

46. See *Aggañña Sutta* 3.27.8 (*DN* 27) on Pasenadi's homage to the Buddha despite the Sakyans' homage to Pasenadi, discussed in Collins 1993, 340–41. *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 3, the *Kosalasaṃyutta*, gathers together the Buddha's many conversations with King Pasenadi.

47. This would be one of the Buddha's more positive characterizations of the ancient Vedic Brahmins, though still couched in ambiguity (see next note).

48. It is, of course, interesting that the Buddha says the Brahmins are still collecting (presumably Vedic) mantras.

49. Tsuchida 1991, 74; on this simile, see *Tevijja Sutta* (*DN*) 13.15; *Caṅkī Sutta* (*MN*) 95.13; *Subha Sutta* (*MN*) 99.9.

50. The Buddha pulls this surprise elsewhere: for example, in the *Brahmāyu* and *Sela Suttas* (*MN* 91.6–7, 29–30; 92.13–14). I have not found an illuminating discussion.

him, rues how the Buddha has "brought up more and more things against us" from hearing such insults, and kicks Ambaṭṭha to the ground (14–15).

It is too late in the evening for Pokkharasāti to do what he would like, which is to set out at once to see the Buddha, so he leaves early the next morning by torchlight. Greeted by the Buddha, he exchanges courtesies, sits down, and asks whether the Buddha recalls a conversation with his student. Hearing "all that had passed," Pokkharasāti says, "Reverend Gotama, Ambaṭṭha is a young fool. May the reverend Gotama pardon him."[51] The Buddha replies, "Brahmin, May Ambaṭṭha be happy." The Buddha now also sets Pokkharasāti's "mind at rest" as to the thirty-two marks, and Pokkharasāti invites the Buddha and his monks to accept a meal from him that day, which the Buddha accepts by his silence.[52] Pokkharasāti has apparently anticipated this acceptance, for he is able to say, "It is time, Reverend Gotama, the meal is ready." And in the early morning, taking his robe and bowl, the Buddha goes "with his order of monks to Pokkharasāti's residence"; Pokkharasāti serves him personally, and the young Brahmin men—Ambaṭṭha is not mentioned, but who knows?[53]—serve the monks. And when the Buddha has finished eating, Pokkharasāti takes a low seat to one side.

> And as Pokkharasāti sat there, the Lord delivered a graduated discourse[54] on generosity, on morality and on heaven, showing the danger, degradation and corruption of sense-desires, and the profit of renunciation. And when the Lord knew that Pokkharasāti's mind was ready, pliable, free from the hindrances, joyful and calm, then he preached a sermon on Dhamma in brief: on suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path. And just as a clean cloth from which all stains have been removed receives the dye perfectly, so in the Brahmin Pokkharasāti, as he sat there, there arose the pure and spotless Dhamma-eye, and he knew: "Whatever things have an origin must come to cessation." (3.2.21)

Most of this is stock prose, but in the dialogues with householder Brahmins in the *Dīgha* and *Majjhima Nikāyas*, Pokkharasāti is one of the few who is said to have

51. As Brian Black has noted (American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Washington DC, November 2006; 2011), young Ambaṭṭha may remind one in several ways of the "young Śvetaketu," whom Olivelle 2005*b*, 13–51 has so richly portrayed as the representative Brahmanical "spoiled brat." Roughly parallel, Śvetaketu is a pupil who fully shares his master's knowledge (*BĀU* 6.2.4), yet falls short of real knowledge, leaves the master (his own father, Uddālaka) to seek beyond what he has taught, and gets further learning from a Kṣatriya.

52. 3.2.16–19. On this stock theme, see Bailey and Mabbett 2003, 237–57 on "meal narratives," especially with Brahmin landholders; see also Tsuchida 1991, 81–82.

53. Cf. Malalasekera [1937] 1983, 1: 152, agreeing that it is left uncertain whether Ambaṭṭha "became a follower of the Buddha," and noting that Buddhaghosa squelches the idea, saying "that the Buddha knew that Ambaṭṭha would not profit by his discourse in his present life," and that he preached to Ambaṭṭha "at such length" so "that it might be repeated to Pokkarasādi."

54. Cf. Gethin 2004, 517: "by means of a step by step instruction (*anupubbī kathā*)."

experienced the Dhamma-eye while apparently remaining a lay convert.[55] The *sutta* then concludes that Pokkharasāti, "having seen, attained, and penetrated the Dhamma,[56] having passed beyond doubt, transcended uncertainty, having gained perfect confidence in the teacher's doctrine (*dhamma*) without relying on others, said, 'Excellent, Lord, excellent! It is as if someone were to set up what has been knocked down, or to point out the way to one who had got lost, or to bring an oil lamp into a dark place, so those with eyes could see what was there. Just so the Blessed Lord has expounded the Dhamma in various ways.' "[57] He announces that he, his son, wife, ministers, and counselors will take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, and he asks that Gotama "accept me as a lay follower who has taken refuge from this day forth as long as life shall last!" Henceforth, he says, the Buddha will always be welcome in Ukkaṭṭha, and whenever young men and maidens greet him courteously, it "will be for their welfare and happiness for a long time." To which the Buddha replies, "Well said, Brahmin!"

Now if we go back to our observation that the *AmbS* is noteworthy for engaging Brahmins on social and political matters, we may ask our accompanying question: where is the *dhamma* in this text? My working premise is that we find it in three places: in the mutual hospitality codes that both sides accept but also put to a test; in the ways that the text moves the exponents of Buddhist and Brahmanical *dharma* from initial incivilities toward a civil and fulfilling discourse; and in the rhetoric of artful and persuasive teaching that we have just seen emphasized in closing. These matters would contextualize the *suttas* historically, since they must be engaging Brahmanical *dharma* with such persuasive artistry over some particular period. In this *sutta*, at least, the Buddha twists the alleged Brahmanical law to Buddhist ends, but he is debating matters that are not codified as Brahmanical *dharma* before the *dharmasūtras*: most notably, mixed social classes, which are not treated systematically in the earliest *dharmasūtra* of Āpastamba, as well as marriage law and eligibility for Vedic teaching. But let us work back to the rhetoric by looking at three ways this *sutta* and others juxtapose Buddhist and Brahmanical *dharmas*: in addressing the training of young men; in responding to householders; and in treating relations between Kṣatriyas, kings, and Brahmins.

55. The Dhamma-eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*), which can denote "'entering the stream' and thus being set irrevocably on the path" (Walshe [1987] 1995, 547–48 n. 140), also arises like this for the householder Brahmins Brahmāyu (*Brahmāyu Sutta* [*MN* 91] 36) and Kūṭadanta (in the highly stereotyped *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (*DN* 5.29; see Tsuchida 1991, 89). As Tsuchida observes, the *Sela Sutta* (*MN* 92) is "quite exceptional" in having the householder Brahmin Sela become a monk and arahant rather than just a lay devotee or *upāsaka*. But rather than the arising of the Dhamma-eye, Sela "directly knew" (*MN* 92.27; Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2005, 762). But this could be translating the same thing.

56. Walshe's translation condenses here. Cf. Gethin 2004, 518: having "seen the truth (*diṭṭha-dhammo*), gained the truth (*patta-dhammo*), known the truth (*vidita-dhammo*), penetrated the truth (*pariyogāḷha-dhammo*). . . ."

57. This is a stock passage; cf. the response of the Kalāmas after the Buddha has responded to their "fitting doubts" in *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 3.65 (Bodhi 2005, 88–92; 432 n. 8).

1. The training of young men is obviously this *sutta*'s pivot. It is when Ambaṭṭha hears himself being called "untrained" for his physical discourtesies that he insults the Sakyans and the Buddha verbally, not to mention all the five hundred monks travelling in the Buddha's company. Indeed, we could infer that it is they who are well trained by the evidence that they did not rise to teach young Ambaṭṭha a lesson he deserved. As the Buddha makes clear, whereas neither Ambaṭṭha nor Pokkharasāti is "a sage or one trained in the way of a sage," a Buddha is an "incomparable Trainer of men to be tamed." In terms of Vinaya, the Buddha is contrasting Ambaṭṭha's rudeness with the training given to monks and nuns, and particularly the "Training Rules" by which all monks and nuns govern not only their own communal interactions but their interactions with householder Brahmins like Pokkharasāti.
2. We see that the Buddha meets Pokkharasāti's request to host him with a meal even though the Buddha knows he is behind Ambaṭṭha's big insult. Elsewhere in the *suttas*, the Buddha couches his teaching in terms meant for the more ordinary householder, a figure of obvious importance to monks and nuns who beg for their food. In another, he is asked by a family man from a market town:

   > Venerable sir, we are laypeople who enjoy sensual pleasures, dwelling at home in a bed crowded with children, enjoying fine sandalwood, wearing garlands, scents, and unguents, accepting gold and silver. Let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma to us in a way that will lead to our welfare and happiness both in the present life and in the future life as well. (*AN* 8.54; Bodhi trans. 2005, 124)

Welfare in the present and future life are two of the three types of benefit that the Buddha's *dhamma* promotes, with the third, unmentioned by this jolly layman, being liberation, *nibbāna* (Sanskrit *nirvāṇa*).[58] The Buddha replies that four things lead to a householder's welfare and happiness in this life: persistent effort, protection, good friendship, and balanced living. And four "other things lead to a family man's welfare and happiness in the future life": "Accomplishment in faith, moral discipline, generosity, and wisdom." Each gets a pithy summary. Persistent effort goes into earning a living; protection refers to "wealth earned by the sweat of his brow, righteous wealth righteously gained"; good friendship is found in any "village, town, or family" with "householders or their sons, whether

58. See Bodhi 2005, 108–9. Commentators enumerate "three types of benefit" that the "teaching is intended to promote, graded hierarchically according to their relative merit": welfare and happiness whose nature is visible (*diṭṭha-dhamma-hitasukha*), that is, in the present life, which is "attained by fulfilling one's moral and social responsibilities"; "welfare and happiness pertaining to the next life, attained by engaging in meritorious deeds"; and "Nibbāna, final release from the cycle of rebirths, attained by developing the Noble Eightfold Path."

young or old, who are of mature virtue, accomplished in faith, moral discipline, generosity, and wisdom"; and balanced living calls for a balanced budget. The four things under "good friendship"—faith, moral discipline, generosity, and wisdom—are the hinge between the two sets, since they also lead to welfare and happiness in the future life. The Buddha often treats friendship as the first of four "Unlimiteds," also called the four *brahmavihāras* or "Sublime Attitudes" (Aronson 1984), which should be cultivated in all circumstances: friendship, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. He also says, "This is the entire holy life, Ānanda, that is, good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship" (*SN* 45.2; Bodhi trans. 2000, 1524). But here he seems to be linking friendship more with the hospitality shown by "good people," which is also typical of the *dharmasūtras*: the generous family man "dwells at home with a mind devoid of stinginess, . . . delighting in giving and sharing." Ultimately, this program for householders also envisions the third benefit of *nirvāṇa*: the wise family man "possesses the wisdom that sees into the arising and passing away of phenomena, that is noble and penetrative and leads to the complete destruction of suffering."

3. The *AmbS* mentions several kings in passing, but the Buddha is the only Kṣatriya to appear in person. Here it is pertinent to recall the emerging signs we noted in chapter 3 that *dharma* has begun to imply litigation at a king's court. Though not a king, the Buddha speaks poignantly for the justice of the Sakyan court/*sabhā* where his father would be (or have been) king (or, in the "oligarchic-republican"[59] polity ascribed to the Sakyas, seated in good humor on one of those high seats as primus inter pares). Although royal *dharma* is not the focus of the Buddha's *dhamma*, he can speak to it. Here he mentions two key symbols, the king's *cakra* and the Brahmin's *daṇḍa*, as if in opposition. *Cakra* means "wheel" and *daṇḍa* means "stick," "rod," or "rod of punishment." On the one hand, the *cakra*, a symbol for the "wheel-turning emperor" (*cakravartin*), is a reminder that the Buddha could have chosen to be a *cakravartin* and just king (*dharmarāja*) himself.[60] According to the *Cakkavatti-Sīhanāda Sutta* (*DN* 26) 1.2 and the *Brahmāyu Sutta* (*MN* 91) 5, a Wheel-turning Monarch "rules without a rod, without a weapon, by means of the *Dhamma*."[61] Of course, *cakravartins* and just kings are the exception, and the Buddha has his preference for smaller scale republics, as we have seen in his remark

59. For this terminology, see Collins 1998, 436; cf. 66.

60. I see nothing gained in Biardeau's view (2002, 1: 97) that the *cakravartin* is a legendary and late figure in Buddhist usage.

61. Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi trans. 2005, 744; cf. Walshe [1987] 1995, 112, 396: "without stick or sword, by the law."

about the little female quail. But if there must be those who aspire to empire, they should measure themselves against the highest standards of the Buddhist monastic Community or *saṅgha*:

> The Blessed One said: "Monks, even a wheel-turning monarch, a just and righteous king, does not govern his realm without a co-regent." When he had spoken, a certain monk addressed the Blessed One thus: "But who, venerable sir, is the co-regent of the wheel-turning monarch, the just and righteous king?" "It is the Dhamma, the law of righteousness, O monk," replied the Blessed One. (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* [*AN*] 3: 14; Bodhi trans. 2005, 115)

Just so, in a renowned passage in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, before he dies, the Buddha refuses to name a successor to lead the *saṅgha*; rather, his own successor will be the *dhamma* (*DN* 16.6.1). On the other hand, the *daṇḍa* seems to be a symbol primarily of the Brahmin. In the *AmbS*, the Buddha concentrates on the *brahmadaṇḍa* by which a "great sage" (note, he does not call him a Brahmin) overwhelms King Okkāka to marry a princess with ill-gained mantras obtained from Southern Brahmins, surely with implications that such Brahmins would be less careful about Brahmin pedigree (neither Kaṇha's father nor mother is a Brahmin), and that they might not notice if someone seeking Brahmin knowledge was dark. Brahmanical *dharmaśāstra* texts will insist that kings rule with the *daṇḍa* (see chapter 5), and the Brahmanical epics will assign both the *cakra* and *daṇḍa* to both avatars and kings.

Such an implicit contrast between the *cakra* and the *daṇḍa* allows us to speak to the rhetoric of this and the other discourses we have cited. For if the *dharma* as teaching lies in the Buddha's rhetoric of artful persuasion, one factor would be that he gives a new, challenging, and critical twist to an old Vedic term that already carries implications of royal authority. As we have seen, the Upaniṣads give us brief glimpses of kings who see things (notably including karma) from the big picture. But those kings are not central speakers in a developed story who put the big picture together for others, for one and all; and when they suggest a vision of the big picture, they do not use the term *dharma*, which, to date, had been coming more and more to define Brahmin privilege, and law or justice that privileges mainly Brahmins. This is precisely the challenge that the *dhamma* poses in discourses where the Buddha's primary interlocutors are Brahmins. As the Buddha says after being asked his opinion on what Brahmins "prescribe," "Well, brahmin, has all the world authorized the brahmins to prescribe. . . ?" (*Esukāri Sutta*, *MN* 96.4 and 11). For the first time, *dharma* is presented as a tactic of civil discourse for engaging Brahmins, *among others*, with the wider implications of what has ostensibly been their own

enigmatic term. Especially in the longer *suttas*, *dhamma* is for the first time the overarching subject of well-rounded narrative (indeed, as we have stressed, of well-framed and well-rounded intersecting narratives). Throughout, it is there to be questioned, tested, penetrated, and enjoyed.

B. Abhidharma Basket *Dharma*

Abhidharma, the "Further" or "Higher Dharma," is the project of those who enjoyed taking such questioning, testing, and penetrating to new heights. Though they fill the *Abhidharma Basket* with texts said to be the word of the Buddha, they are clearly later scholastics. Abhidharma "tendencies" can, however, be traced through usages of the term *mātikā* (Sanskrit *mātrika*) for the "matrix"-type lists or codes one finds in some *suttas*, and in *sutta* references to *mātikādharas*, "those who maintain the lists," beside "those who maintain the Dhamma and the Vinaya." The *Dasuttara Sutta*, for instance, lists 550 *dhammas* to be cultivated or abandoned. The *Saṅgītī Sutta* gives an even larger number, and the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* lists 1,011.[62] There is no sure way to identify such lists as late, but the "*dharma* theory" that typifies the Abhidharma seems to take matters into new directions. As we saw in chapter 2, the Aśokan edicts make it likely that Aśoka was familiar with facets of Abhidharmic *dharma* theory, and that it would have been developing by his time—notably among the "Nikāya schools" whose Abhidharma differences are sometimes traced back to the Third Council under him (ca. 250 BCE), the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins. The edifice of an *Abhidharma Basket* on top of one concerned with Dharma was evidently the work of several further centuries of continuing refinement, intra-school debate, and interreligious sharpening of ideas. We will limit ourselves to this *dharma* theory, which can be only partially traced from the *Sūtra Basket*.

Abhidharmic *dharma* theory concerns itself with more technical meanings of *dharma* than we have seen so far in the *suttas*. By now we have met three basic meanings that are typical of the *suttas*' rhetorical purposes: the Buddha's "teaching," "law," or "doctrine"; the "truth" that the teaching makes accessible through the Buddhist path; and well-trained "good behavior." The latter meaning is also typical of the *Vinaya Basket*, as is another we have met: that of "rules," as in monastic "training rules."[63]

62. See Skorupski 1987, 333: "The *Dasuttara Sutta* enumerates some 550 *dharmas* to be cultivated or abandoned. The *Saṅgītī Sutta* gives an even larger number of them, and the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* lists some 1,011." Warder 1971, 279–80 argues that the *Dasuttara* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 34) and *Mahāparinibbāna Suttas* are "old" texts.

63. Omitting "rules," Gethin (2004, 515–16) finds six basic meanings in the Pāli texts: (*a*) the Buddha's "teaching," (*b*) "good conduct," (*c*) "the 'truth' realized by the practice of the Buddhist path," (*d*) "any particular 'nature' or 'quality' that something possesses," (*e*) "the underlying 'natural law or order' of things," and (*f*) *dharmas* plural.

Two other meanings are not specifically Buddhist. One is somewhat rare, at least in Pāli, where *dhamma* or *dharma* can refer to the underlying law or structure of the cosmos, the truth about it, which both Buddhist and Brahmanical texts can speak of as an "eternal *dharma*" that remains unchanged. The other is an old meaning of *dhárman*, *dharma*, and *dhamma* found in Vedic, classical Sanskrit, and Pāli, respectively. Here, as the second noun in a type of noun-compound that we can call "possessive compounds," the term indicates the particular "nature" or "quality" that the preceding noun possesses. We have met such a usage, but the translation disguised it. The stock phrase that described Pokkharasāti's breakthrough, "Whatever things have an origin must come to cessation," could be translated "the *nature* of everything whose *nature* it is to arise, is to cease" (Gethin 2004, 518, author's emphasis). That is, whatever has "the nature or quality of arising (*samudaya-dhamma*)" has "the nature or quality of cessation (*nirodha-dhamma*)"—arising and cessation being the second and third of the four noble truths. As Gethin observes, this meaning is prominent in Buddhist usage at the end of *bahuvrīhi* (Pāli *bahubbīhi*) compounds. A. K. Warder provides numerous other such *bahuvrīhi* usages from the Nikāyas, noting that their meaning "quality" or "nature" may overlap with some of the other Buddhist meanings mentioned above.[64] As these and other authors have noted,[65] the usage has an old Vedic precedent where *dhárman* can mean the "'nature' or 'quality' that something possesses." As we saw in chapter 3, Brereton (2004, 472) glosses this meaning as "foundational nature," while noting that other translators favor such a rendering more frequently than he did; and it is deployed when Yājñavalkya tells Maitreyī that the self "has an indestructible nature" in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. As Gethin shows, there is a route from this fourth meaning to "*dharmas* plural": one, I believe, that offers considerable clarification on this Buddhist plural usage such as one finds in the aforementioned lists or codes (Skorupski 1987, 333). But to appreciate the clarification means first considering the problem.

64. Warder 1971, 282–84; cf. Gethin's paraphrase on watching *dhammas* as *dhammas* in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as revealing "the underlying equivalence between seeing *dhammas* . . . and seeing the *dhamma* or the truth" (2004, 536). One case is the famous raft simile: "Bhikkhus, when you know the Dhamma to be similar to a raft, you should abandon even the teachings, how much more so the things contrary to the teachings (*dhammā pi pahātabbā vo pageva adhammā*)." As Bodhi notes, "The word *dhammā* is ambiguous here," and has been interpreted by one commentary as attachment to "good states"— that is, "*dharmas* plural"—linked to serenity and insight meditation that should be abandoned (though not the good states themselves). But Bodhi, like other recent interpreters, takes it to indicate that attachment to the teachings "can be an obstacle to progress," and that *adhammā* "would include the moral laxity that the bhikkhu Ariṭṭha advocated" (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, 224–29, 1208–9; cf. Gombrich 1996, 22–23; Williams 2002, 38–39). As we can see, however, it is one of those usages that is open to overlapping interpretations.

65. Warder 1971, 282–83; Gethin 2004, 532–33; Horsch 2004, 440, 448 n. 86; Halbfass 1988, 319, 334, 551 n. 44, 555 n. 1, citing it in conjunction with Pāli *upādavayadhammin*, "subject to origination and decay" and as an instance where "since ancient times *dharma* . . . [can mean] 'property,' 'characteristic attribute,' 'essential feature,' or more generally . . . 'defining factor' or 'predicate' " (334).

I believe this *usage* is untraceable to any prior Vedic or Brahmanical plural *meaning*, and that it is an important Buddhist innovation in both usage and meaning. Yet I also believe that scholars have been right to stress that all these Buddhist meanings of *dharma* can overlap and be juxtaposed in given contexts, and that "*dharmas* plural" gains particular intelligibility as a Buddhist twist on the old compound meaning of *dharma* as the "nature," "quality," or "property" that something possesses.

A quick list would include the following among a century's attempts to translate or explain this distinctive usage: "truths," "laws," "states," "merits," "practices," "phenomena," "things," "elements," "conditions," "factors," "data," "qualities," "forces," "regularities," "identifiables," "noeta," "irreducibles," "mind objects," and "ideas." One of the more basic Abhidharma classifications divides *dharmas* into physical and mental categories, and some of these emphasize one dimension or the other, while others suggest attempts to straddle them. One of the more serviceable straddling translations is "mental events," since it is applicable in all Buddhist schools to the review and clarification of "*dharmas* plural" in meditation.[66] Yet it is awkward as a general definition since it typifies the idealist "mind-only" doctrine of one of the Mahāyāna schools called Yogācāra.[67] To my mind, "mental events," "forces," and "regularities" are the most fruitful translations of major arcs of the meaning of "*dharmas* plural." But, as we shall see, "qualities" on the one hand and "elements," "phenomena," and even "things" on the other also have their uses in making, respectively, philological and philosophical points.

B.1. Dharmas *Plural in the Nikāyas*

If scholars can be found to have come up with such variety in translating "*dharmas* plural," they will have attempted to contextualize their choices. Of course everyone agrees that the Buddhist usage has to be contextualized somewhere in the teachings of early Buddhism. But from there, agreement breaks down, resulting in three main approaches. Some of these meanings have been proposed from the premise that "*dharmas* plural" is borrowed from prior Brahmanical usages. But as I have been attempting to show in anticipating this point, this approach is particularly lacking in evidence. There can be no linking of the Buddhist usage to an "original pluralistic meaning of the word" *dhárman*

66. See Warder 1971, 280, commenting on mental/physical distinction in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*: "It could of course be suggested that any *dhamma* could be regarded as a thought-content in so far as it could be thought of, as an idea or concept, including physical phenomena."

67. See Cox 2004, 551 on the Sārvāstivādins' "fundamental distinction" between material form (*rūpa*) and nonmaterial mental events (*nāma*).

if the word has no such original pluralistic meaning (see chapter 3 § A). And there is no common transitional meaning, despite some suggestive candidates,[68] that will convincingly get us from Brahmanical lists of privileges, laws, duties, or ritual details to anything that would explain how the Buddhist usage would have such a different range of meanings.[69] A second approach, which accompanies the view that the Buddha did not himself teach about "*dharmas* plural," has been to propose that "*dharmas* plural" is an Abhidharmic extension of one of the supposedly more basic and earlier Buddhist meanings of *dharma* in the singular—that is, the "truth,"[70] or the "teaching" or "doctrine."[71] Here there is too much evidence to the contrary. Gethin, for instance, finds it "undeniable, whether or not one accepts this as something the Buddha himself taught," that a "basic understanding" of plural *dhammas*[72] "is firmly established and imbedded in the Nikāyas. Indeed, I think it is not unreasonable to suggest that it is the prevalent usage of the word *dhamma* in the Nikāyas" (2004, 521). We must come back to the chief contexts in which it is so embedded. A third approach, exemplified by Halbfass (1992) in his work on the Brahmanical Vaiśeṣikas and Cox in her work on the Buddhist Sarvāstivādins, has been to trace the relationship between meanings both in and outside Buddhism through "the context of early Indian scholasticism"—a "tapestry woven in often unexpected directions as a result of both internal dynamics and external influences and events" (Cox 2004, 547). Such an approach, which comes with a fine note of caution on filling in gaps to tell stories of "development" (554), starts from texts expressive of the competing and intermingling outlooks of some of the eighteen schools of "Nikāya Buddhism." But the method would have relevance to what one finds "even in the early period" (547) in the Nikāya texts as well, which have their conversational implications and their unexpected leads.

This brings us, then, back to the Nikāyas and to the main contexts in which they represent the Buddha as teaching about "*dharmas* plural" within them. To some extent, interpretations of such *dharmas* have been affected by the

68. Warder proposes "regularities"; Gethin proposes "practices."

69. See chapter 3 § E on the views of Horsch, Olivelle, and Bowles as regards mainly the hinge *dharma* of "cooking the world" in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.5.7.1. Horsch proposes that the plural Buddhist usage is "best rendered by 'legal factors of existence'" (2004, 440).

70. See Horner 1948, 115–16 and Lamotte 1988, 23–26, as cited by Cox 2004, 545, 579. Cf. Gethin 2004, 514, 528–30, on Gombrich 1996, 34–36, and on Geiger and Geiger 1920, for whom, of four meanings, law, teaching, truth, and thing, the last "far removed" and thus their project to explain: they assume that a prior meaning of "norms" or "laws" or "truths" becomes pluralized, so that to see them means to see *the* Law, *the* Truth.

71. See Bronkhorst 1985*a*; 1999*a*, 25; 1999*b*, 19, for whom, as Cox (2004, 544–45) puts it, "*dharma* in the sense of 'element' is derived from *dharma* as 'teaching'"; "efforts were made to distill the most important ideas and concepts from [the Buddha's] teaching . . . [which] gave rise to lists of so-called *dharmas*." Warder 1971, 278–79, reverses the assumption, suggesting that the meaning "doctrine" would derive from the plural usage.

72. He has just spoken of a "particular understanding" of *dhammas* as "basic qualities, both mental and physical, that in some sense constitute experience or reality in its entirety."

context selected for study. Most discussions have been focused on mindfulness. But even though mindfulness is of supreme importance, it tends to be singled out at the expense of underemphasizing right effort, which has some more basic implications. For one thing, it has affected Bronkhorst's view that the Buddha would not have taught "*dharmas* plural" himself. Bronkhorst's position is facilitated by his almost exclusive attention to the "*dhammas* 'on the side of enlightenment'" (*bodhipakkhiyā dhammā, bodhipakṣya-dharmas*).[73] With this topic, often grouped but barely named in the Nikāyas (Warder 1971, 279), Bronkhorst can point to variations in lists that could well have been affected by the Abhidharmic tendency to increase systematization. But while it is altogether likely that there are earlier and later versions of these lists, it cannot eliminate the question of whether the Buddha taught through lists, which leaves the case of the *bodhipakṣadharmas* rather undecidable (see n. 62 above). As to the other main contexts, however, they are little affected by the list criterion.

In all, there are five such main contexts. For whatever expository significance it may have, I enumerate and discuss them in the order of their occurrence in the Buddha's life story in relation to the unfolding logic of his teaching. These contexts are his teachings of: (*a*) dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), which is considered to be the culminating insight of his enlightenment; (*b*) right effort, first mentioned as the sixth member of the eightfold path that he declares in his first sermon; (*c*) right mindfulness, likewise first mentioned as the seventh member of the eightfold path; (*d*) the "discrimination" or "discernment of *dharmas*" (*dhamma-vicaya, dharma-pravicaya*),[74] which occurs in practicing right mindfulness and also as one of the seven "members of enlightenment" (*bojjhaṅga, bodhyaṅga*); and (*e*) the thirty-seven *bodhipakṣyadharmas*. I will not address this latter grouping[75] other than to say that it includes not only the seven "members of enlightenment" but the four foundations of (right) mindfulness and the four right endeavors of (right) effort, which will be discussed below.

Frequently mentioned in the *suttas* as a list of wholesome (*kusala*) *dhammas*, or just *dhammas* (Bronkhorst 1985*a*, 305), the Buddha sets them out with finality in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, the *sutta* on his last days, as "a list of *dhammas* he had ascertained and taught for the benefit and happiness of the people" (Warder 1971, 279).

73. As translated by Warder (1971, 279). Cf. Skorupski 1987, 333: "practice and principles conducive to the attainment of enlightenment."

74. Cox 2004, 549. For the Pāli usage, see for example *DN* 22.16 (*Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*).

75. For extensive discussion, see Bronkhorst 1985*a*; Gethin 1992. Cox 2004, 550 calls it "the most enduring summary presentation of Buddhist praxis."

B.I.A. DEPENDENT ORIGINATION (*PAṬICCA-SAMUPPĀDA, PRATĪTYA-SAMUTPĀDA*). What is often called the "law of dependent origination" (also translated as "dependent arising," "conditioned origination," "conditioned genesis," "conditioned coproduction") is regarded as the Buddha's climactic insight on the morning of his enlightenment, and as tantamount to that enlightenment. In his foundational study of the Buddhist *dharma* theory, Theodore Stcherbatsky offers a well-considered description:

> Although the separate elements (*dharmas*) are not connected with one another, either by a pervading stuff in space or by duration in time, there is, nevertheless, a connexion between them; their manifestations in time, as well as in space, are subject to definite laws, the laws of causation. These laws bear the general name of *pratītya-samutpāda*. We have seen that the connotation of the word *dharma* implies the meaning of elements operating together with others. The concerted life of the elements (*saṃskṛtatva*) is but another name for the laws of causation—the combined origination (*sam-utpāda*) of some elements with regard to other elements. Thus it is that the fundamental idea of Buddhism—*the conception of a plurality of separate elements*—includes the idea of the most strict causality controlling their operation in the world process. (Stcherbatsky [1922] 1988, 28; author's italics)

What Stcherbatsky describes as "the concerted life of the elements" means the "conditionality" of *dharmas*, and in Theravāda Buddhism all *dhammas* are conditioned except *nibbāna* (Sarvāstvadin Buddhism, as we shall see, identifies three unconditioned *dharmas*). One caveat here: "the idea of the most strict causality" needs softening, and I would suggest—working from some ideas of Warder—that "the hypothesis of a testable regularity"[76] would be a better starting point. Stcherbatsky's emphasis on "some elements," and on "laws" rather than "law," is helpful in this regard: one should not rush to confuse *dhammas* with "the Dharma."[77]

76. See Warder 1971, 289–94, especially 289: "The *dhamma* hypothesis" seeks "the 'real' laws of nature underlying the surface appearance of things, the 'real' forces underlying the personifications of superstition, the 'real' way the universe works underlying the imaginary terrors of religion and the imaginary rule of 'gods.' " Also 290: one seeks "fundamental regularities underlying the apparent chaos of data." Cf. Cox 2004, 547.

77. We may extend here a possible reading of Warder's "remark" (or aside) that the meaning "'doctrine' . . . appears to derive from the idea of 'the way things are' as ascertained by the Buddha through his experience" (1971, 278). The Buddha experiences the "regularities" on the morning of his enlightenment. Then he preaches the *dhamma*. Of course, he is also, earlier, said to have learned and rejected the *dhamma* of two other teachers.

According to Gethin, "the question of the relationship between *dhamma* and *dhammas* is perhaps most easily seen with reference to *paṭicca-samuppāda*. It is stated in the Nikāyas that he who sees *paṭicca-samuppāda* sees *dhamma* and that he who sees *dhamma* sees *paṭicca-samuppāda*. This is in fact a very succinct statement of the principle involved, for what is *paṭicca-samuppāda* apart from the interrelatedness of *dhammas*?"[78] Bodhi (2005, 283, 284) translates the statement as follows: "He who sees dependent arising sees *dhamma*; he who sees *dhamma* sees dependent arising."[79] The statement is attributed to the Buddha by Sāriputra, his chief disciple on matters of meditation, and, as Gethin observes, "The text goes on to explain that the five aggregates of attachment have arisen dependently (*paṭicca-samuppanna*)."[80] Moreover, the *MN* commentary "glosses the Buddha's saying as 'he who sees causal conditions, sees dependently arisen *dhammas*.' "[81] That is, the *dhamma* seen in seeing dependent origination is taken as the seeing of "*dhammas* plural." Gethin suggests that the commentary makes a "quite deliberate play" here "on the meaning of *dhamma*, a play, moreover, that is entirely consonant with the Nikāyas." For in the Nikāyas, seeing how *dhammas* "arise and disappear, seeing how they are dependently arisen—one sees the ultimate truth: he who sees *dhammas* sees *dhamma*." In saying this, Gethin wants to assure readers that he is not imputing an Abhidhamma meaning to the Nikāyas: he is "not suggesting that *dhamma* is used in early Buddhist thought in the sense of an irreducible element.[82] The use of *dhamma* in the general sense of a mental or physical quality is quite distinct from the question of the metaphysical and ontological status of those qualities." Such ontological and metaphysical matters are "debated and discussed by the later schools" (2004, 536–37). Gethin continues to work out this insight around the theme of "watching *dhammas* as *dhammas*," which pertains to mindfulness practice.

Now, as Stcherbatsky notes, dependent origination applies, at least first of all, to "some" *dharmas*: specifically, the terminology is used to describe the

78. Gethin 1992, 151, as quoted by Cox 2004, 546, who cites also Gethin 1992, 147–54.

79. *Yo paṭiccasamuppādaṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati, yo dhammaṃ passati so paṭiccasamuppadaṃ passati*; *MN* 28.28, 35.

80. The five aggregates (*skandhas*)—body, feelings, perceptions, motivational forces, and consciousness—are the constituents of personality and the grounds for thinking there is a unifying "self." Sāriputra, discussing the five in relation to craving, continues: "And these five aggregates affected by clinging are dependently arisen. The desire, indulgence, inclination, and holding based on these five aggregates affected by clinging is the origin of suffering. The removal of desire and lust, the abandonment of desire and lust for these five aggregates affected by clinging is the cessation of suffering." See Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2005, 283, 1223 n. 342.

81. Cf. Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2005, 1223 n. 341, translating this gloss: "One who sees dependent origination sees dependently arisen states (*paṭicca samuppanne dhamme*); one who sees dependently arisen states sees dependent origination."

82. Cf. Warder 1971, 278: "The four old Nikāyas are not as clear about *dhamma* meaning an 'element' as is the *Abhidhamma*. They seem instead to offer discussions using the word a little more freely, apparently without defining it, out of which the precise concept of the *Abhidhamma* might have been extracted."

(usually) twelve *nidānas*—"causes" or "sources"—in the so-called formula of dependent origination. These twelve are old age and death, birth, becoming, grasping, thirst, sensations, contact, the six sense-fields, name-and-form (= the five aggregates), consciousness, motivational forces, and ignorance. Warder calls attention to passages that speak of the idea that these *nidānas* as *dhammas* have "regularity" and serve as "'stations' for one another. In other words the point about *dhammas* is their regularity, their constant relations despite the impermanent, transient nature of all of them" (1971, 287). The key passage occurs in the *Paccaya Sutta* from the *Nidānasaṃyutta*[83] of the *SN* (II 25). In response to his own question, "And what, bhikkhus, is dependent origination?" the Buddha explains that old age and death have birth as their condition (and so on back through the other *nidānas*), whether or not Tathāgatas arise or do not arise. Then he says, "This *dhātu* is established (*ṭhitā va sā dhātu*), there is a station for *dhammas*, there is regularity of *dhammas* (*dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā*), there is specific conditionality. This a Tathāgata attains enlightenment about."[84] Warder is, of course, making a larger point in translating *dharmas* as "regularities," and takes the compound *dhammaniyāmatā* as "regularity of *dhammas*." *Niyāmatā* could even mean "reliability":[85] the Buddha discovers regularity amid regularities that one can rely on. Meanwhile, Warder's translation "stations" draws on passages that use the term *dhātu* to explain how *dhammas* condition other *dhammas* in dependent origination. Although *dhātu* can mean "element," as in the five elements,[86] Warder takes it here as "base." In either case, it would have to provide an "element" or "base" by which the Buddha elucidates the causal conditionality of *dhammas*.[87]

83. The "Connected Discourses on Causes," which are all concerned with dependent origination; *paccaya* means "conditions."

84. I slightly modify Warder's translation (1971, 281–82), and do not follow that of Bodhi (2000, 551, notes 741–42), who translates the two usages of *dhamma* as "Dhamma." Bodhi sees support in *AN* I 286, 8–24, where *dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā* is applied to the "three marks" (impermanence, suffering, and non-self), taking this to mean that it would not apply "specifically" to conditionality in the *Saṃyutta* passage. But it would apply specifically in either case. The *Saṃyutta* text explains the "specific conditionality" of dependent origination. Indeed, it goes on to apply what is said about conditions to impermanence. Warder translates the *Aṅguttara* passage as follows: "this *dhātu* is established, there is a station for *dhammas*, there is regularity of *dhammas*, all forces are impermanent" (1971, 285).

85. Or as the *Pali-English Dictionary* puts it, "reliance" (Rhys Davids and Stede [1921–25] 2003, 368). See *Idem* on *aniyāmena*, "without order, aimlessly, at random."

86. Interestingly, the *Pali Dictionary* says *dhātu* is "closely related to *dhamma* in meaning, only implying a closer relation to physical substance" (Rhys Davids and Stede [1921–25] 2003, 348). One finds here a continuation in Pāli of the affinity in Sanskrit between words derived from *dhṛ* (including *dharma*) and from √*dhā*.

87. See Warder 1971, 281 on the classification of eighteen *dhātus*, "elements" or "bases," as basic, distinct elements yielding stimuli and experiences, including "mind base, dhamma base, consciousness through mind base," on which example, "This means that the 'base' consisting of thought-contents or mental objects [= *dhammas*] gives rise to contacts, etc., corresponding to it and eventually to searchings and gains of such objects."

In a conventional Nikāya sense, Sāriputta is praised "for having well penetrated the *dhātu* of *dhammas* [*dhammadhātu*] after he has understood conditioned origination."[88] On a larger canvas, for "Buddhists of several schools afterwards," *dharmadhātu* can mean "*dhamma* base" in the sense of "the whole physical and mental universe, by reference to its conditioned nature or to the regularity of the natural laws causing it to evolve. It is thus equivalent to the 'base' or source of all *dhammas*, of all the elements, the universe as a quarry of events" (Warder 1971, 282). In either case, as Bodhi says, "The ultimate purpose of the teaching on dependent origination is to expose the conditions that sustain the round of rebirths, *saṃsāra*, so as to show what must be done to gain release from that round" (2000, 517). Let us note a provocative statement by Gombrich here: "All that the Buddha claimed to explain was continued rebirth into this world of suffering" (1988, 8).

B.I.B. SETTING THE WHEEL IN MOTION. After his enlightenment, as the Buddha tells it, he reflected that it would be a little hard to communicate "this abstruse Dhamma which goes against the worldly stream, subtle, deep, and difficult to see," and even considered keeping it to himself until the god Brahmā persuaded him, "There will be those who will understand."[89] As the Buddha explains in the "Discourse on Setting in Motion the Wheel of the *Dhamma*," although he had reached complete and perfect enlightenment, he could not claim "to have awakened to it" until he had "thoroughly purified" his knowledge of the four noble truths to present them in an ordered way. The famous first sermon gets to the four truths by first equating the fourth truth, that of a "path," with a "middle way" between sensual self-gratification and self-mortification, and declaring it to be an eightfold path. Then he teaches how the first three truths (suffering, its origin, and its cessation) are to be known, accomplished, and fully understood, implying that he does the same for the fourth truth. This means that he has done no more than mention the eightfold path as including right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The *dhamma* is then set in motion with the first conversion when one of his five listeners, Kondañña, arises with a "dust-free, stainless vision of the Dhamma" and says, "Whatever is subject to origination is subject to cessation" (*SN* 5.420–24).

For what follows, it is useful to mention that the eightfold path is conventionally treated under three headings: wisdom (*paññā, prajñā*), concerned with right view and right intention; morality, involving right speech, right action,

88. Warder 1971 281, citing *Kaḷāra Sutta* (*Saṃyutta Nikāya* II 56).
89. *MN* 26.19–20; Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi [1995] 2005, 260–61; cf. *Brahmasaṃyutta* 1.1 in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*.

and right livelihood; and concentration, requiring right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The wisdom group calls for "seeing 'things' as they are," as in a famous passage where the Buddha addresses the Kālāmas, lay folk and "oligarchs" like his own people, the Sakyas, who want to know how his *dhamma* compares with those they have heard from other ascetic teachers and from Brahmins:

> It is fitting for you to be perplexed, O Kālāmas, it is fitting for you to be in doubt. Doubt has arisen in you about a perplexing matter. Come, Kālāmas. Do not go by oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by a collection of texts, by logic, by inferential reasoning, by reasoned cogitation, by the acceptance of a view after pondering it, by the seeming competence of a teacher, or because you think, "The ascetic is our teacher." But when you know for yourselves, "These things are unwholesome; these things are blameable; these things are censured by the wise; these things, if undertaken and practiced, lead to harm and suffering then you should abandon them."
>
> What do you think Kālāmas? When greed, hatred, and delusion arise in a person, is it for his welfare or harm? . . . (*AN* 3.65; Nyaponika Thera and Bodhi trans. 1999, 65)

But it is the concentration group that introduces that terminology of "*dharmas* plural" into the path.

B.I.C. RIGHT EFFORT. The most basic way that the Buddha teaches right effort is through "the four right endeavors," which occur in many places in stock-phrases:

> A monk . . . endeavours so that bad, unwholesome *dhammas* that have not arisen, do not arise; . . . he endeavours so that bad, unwholesome *dhammas* that have arisen are abandoned; . . . he endeavours so that wholesome *dhammas* that have not arisen, arise; he endeavours so that wholesome *dhammas* that have arisen, are constant, not lost, increase, grow, develop, are complete. (*DN* 33.1.11; Walshe trans. [1987] 1995, 487)

Right effort is thus applied to recognizing *dhammas* under the headings of "wholesome" (*kusala*) and "unwholesome" (*akusala*) and fostering progress by abetting or diverting them according to whether they are wholesome or unwholesome and nascent or current. This practice is basic to what follows as right mindfulness and right concentration. Right mindfulness provides the context where seeing *dhammas* as "wholesome" and "unwholesome" becomes

soteriologically purposeful. And right concentration enables one to enter the first meditation stage "completely secluded from sense desires and unwholesome *dhammas*" and remain in "joy and happiness" (*pītisukham*)[90] once one has "perceived the disappearance" of the most pervasive unwholesome *dhammas* known as the five hindrances: sensual desire, ill-will, sloth-and-torpor, worry-and-flurry, and doubt (*DN* 2.74–75; Walshe trans. [1987] 1995, 593). In a fashion close to an Abhidharma analysis, one *sutta* (*MN* 111) has the Buddha speak additionally of the wholesome *dhammas* that are experienced through all four meditation stages in the "realm of form," in which right concentration can be carried out with increasing detachment from the "realm of desire."[91]

B.I.D. RIGHT MINDFULNESS. For right mindfulness, the key text is the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, often described as one of the most important in early Buddhism both because it is so highly treasured and because it treats a practice that is unparalleled in the yogic meditation practices of Jainism and Hinduism. The *sutta* occurs in two similar versions (*DN* 22; *MN* 10), both said to have been taught in the Kuru country: a curious point, since this is outside the area that the Buddha regularly travelled, and it is not that likely he actually went there.[92] In keeping with the location, and because we shall have occasions to return to it, the topic deserves an aside.

B.I.D.i. THE BUDDHA IN KURU COUNTRY. I asked John Strong about this matter, and he gave it some helpful consideration: "I don't know if there is an evolution or change from canonical to commentarial views, but I do get an impression of ambivalence in the Buddhist materials: Kuru people are untamed, in-your-face people, in need of being converted to Buddhism; on the other hand, Kuru people are basically good, wise, and worthy" (Strong 2007 e-mail).

On this more positive side, "The people of Kuru had a reputation for deep wisdom and good health, and this reputation is mentioned as the reason for the Buddha having delivered some of his most profound discourses to the Kurus" (Malalasekera [1937] 1983, 1: 641–42). The Buddha also goes there to a town,

90. See Gethin 2004, 539 n. 22: "a stock description of the attainment of the first *jhāna*."

91. See Warder 1971, 280: the eleven presumably wholesome *dhammas* that carry through all four *jhānas* of the realm of form are contact, sensation, perception, volition, thought, will, intentness, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention, with alertness added in the fourth.

92. On suttas appearing in two collections, see Norman 1983, 31, proposing that up to the second council, "in early times a large collection of suttas were. . . remembered by heart, and the task of allocating them . . . had not been finished or the allocation completely agreed, by the time the schools began to separate." Cf. Manné 1990, 77–78. Although she does not take up this particular case, one could suspect that the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna*'s Kuru country setting would have been a compromise worked out to accommodate both the *DN*'s public outreach feature and the *MN*'s focus on sermon for monastic training (see above at n. 14).

usually named Kammāsadhamma in the suttas, where he "is supposed to have resided for a time" (Ibid., 642). There, he delivers not only the *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta* in both versions but, among others, the *Mahānidāna* (*DN* 15.1), *Māgandiya* (*MN* 75.1), and *Āṇañjasappāya* (*MN* 106.1) *Suttas*, and two *Saṃyutta Nikāya* suttas in the *Nidānasaṃyutta*: 12.60 on causation (known as the little [*cūḷa*] *Nidāna Sutta*; Bodhi 2000, 35) and 12.66 on inner "exploration." The commentary on the latter says he went there because "a subtle Dhamma discourse, one stamped with the three characteristics, had presented itself to him. In this country, it is said, the people had good roots [supporting conditions for achievement of the noble Dhamma] and were wise [with the wisdom of a three-rooted rebirth consciousness and pragmatic wisdom]. They were capable of penetrating a deep Dhamma talk stamped with the three characteristics. Therefore the Buddha taught here the two Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas . . . and other deep suttas."[93] A complementary image of the Kurus is also found in the *Kurudhamma Jātaka* (No. 276). Once, when the Bodhisatta had become king of the Kurus after his father King Dhanañjaya's death,[94] he observed the five precepts—not taking life, not stealing, not partaking of illicit sex, not lying, and not using intoxicants—under the name of *Kurudhamma*. And such was this Kurudhamma while he ruled that it was also observed by the queen-mother, queen-consort, viceroy, keeper of the royal granaries, palace porter, and the courtesan of the city! The country thus prospered and its people were happy. Meanwhile, drought beset the Kalingas, and their king asked the Kurus for their royal elephant, in hope that it would bring rain. But when the elephant did not bring rain, the Kalingas deduced that the Kurus' prosperity came from the *Kurudhamma*, and sent messengers to find out about it. The messengers reported that from the Kuru king on down to the courtesan, everyone was scrupulous in keeping the Kurudhamma, but also that each one was attentive to some unwitting violation they had committed—which only reinforced the rigor that went into observing the Kurudhamma while emphasizing the "future" Buddhist value of close self-scrutiny. When the Kalinga king practiced Kurudhamma, rain fell in Kalinga (see Cowell [1895], 2005, 1: 251–60; Malalasekera [1937] 1983. 1: 643).

As to the rougher face of the Kurus, Strong suggests that one may find it coming out in the stories of two Brahmins named Māgandīya (2007), each of whom the Buddha converts after he shows some crude misunderstanding: one, by insisting on offering the Buddha his beautiful daughter; the other, by "calling the Buddha a rigid repressionist (*bhunahu*)" (Malalasekera [1937] 1983,

93. Bodhi 2000, 779; subcommentary in brackets; cf Malalasekera [1937] 1983, 1: 529; 642.

94. Dhanañjaya is of course a name for Arjuna in the *Mahābhārata*, but Pāli literature has too many people by that name to make much of it. Malalasekera mentions nine, four of them Kuru kings ([1937] 1983, 1: 1130–31).

2: 594–95). Each encounter takes place in the same Kuru country town where the Buddha delivers his aforementioned deep and subtle sermons.[95] But in the stories that give the town its name, it is not the Kurus who are "in-your-face" but a cannibal who roves their forests. According to Malalasekera, "Even in Buddhaghosa's day the name of the township had two different spellings, and two etymologies are suggested for the names" ([1937] 1983, 1: 529). As Strong summarizes, "There seem to be two accepted forms of the name of the town: Kammāsadamma and Kammāsadhamma. The *Dīghanikāya* Commentary (2: 483) offers slightly varying etymological explanations for both, relating each to the fact that it was the place where (a) the famous ogre 'Spotted Feet' (Kammāsapāda) was 'tamed' or alternatively (b) the place where he was disciplined by adherence to *Kuruvatta-dhamma*." As Watanabe 1909 demonstrates, the cannibal king Kammāsapāda-Kalmāṣapāda figures both in Buddhist stories (notably the *Mahāsutasoma Jātaka*; no. 537) and in the *Mahābhārata* (1.113.21–22; 1.166–73). The epic makes him an Ikṣvāku king of Ayodhyā and gives him nothing directly to do with Kuru country or the Kurus.[96] But in the *Mahāsutasoma Jātaka*, he takes to cannibalism as King Brahmadatta of Benares, and does get entangled with the Kurus when he determines to eat his old friend and tutor, the Kuru prince Sutasoma (the Bodhisatta), who gets him to renounce his cannibalism at Kammāsadamma village and restores him to his kingdom. In this account we have an explanation of the name Kammāsapāda from the event that his foot is wounded on a stake while he is fleeing some pursuers,[97] and the name of the town implies his "restraint" or "taming" (*damma*) there.[98] The alternate spelling of *Kammāsadhamma* "is explained on the ground that the people of the Kuru country had a code of honour called the *Kuruvattadhamma*; it was there that Kammāsa (already referred to) was converted and made to accept this code, hence the name of the township" (Malalasekera [1937] 1983, 1: 529).[99] Since information on "Kuruvattadhamma" seems to be scarce, I am

95. According to Malalasekera [1937] 1983, 1: 528, the "exact place" the Buddha stayed at this town is "mentioned only once, namely the fire hut of a brahmin of the Bhāradvāja-gotra, where a grass mat was spread for him by the brahmin." It was on this occasion that the second Māgandīya excoriated the Buddha's Bhāradvāja host. Cf. Tsuchida 1991, 85, taking this Māgandīya to be an *āhitāgni* entitled to perform śrauta sacrifices like the *jaṭila* ascetics favored in canonical Buddhist texts.

96. His first human meal is, however, of the Ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha's son Śakti, who had first cursed him to become a cannibal, and it is thanks to Vasiṣṭha's interventions that Kalmāṣapāda is relieved of the curse at the same time that Śakti's son Parāśara is kept alive in his mother's womb, making it possible that Parāśara's son Vyāsa will compose the *Mahābhārata* and rescue the Kuru line by siring the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas' fathers.

97. As Ensink 1968, 575, 581–82 shows, some purāṇic versions, but not the *Mahābhārata* ones, account for the name by a story that he dropped hot water on his feet.

98. See Watanabe 1907, 255–59; Cowell [1895] 2005, 3: 246–79; Malalasekera [1937] 1983, 1: 529–30; 2: 573–74.

99. Matters are in fact still more complicated, as there are said to be two Kammāsadammas (the original "big" and the other "small"), and two cannibals named Kammāsa, the second converted in the littler Kammāsadamma in the *Jayaddisa Jātaka*, no. 513 (Malalasekera [1937] 1983, 529, 943–44).

left to guess that this commenterial term would be another name for, or refinement on, the "Kurudhamma" mentioned above in the *Kurudhamma Jātaka*. If so, what seems to be implied is that the Kurus honored the five precepts, before the Buddha even taught them, when hosting a cannibal.[100]

In any case, the place "is described as a *nigama* [town] of the Kurus, where the Buddha resided from time to time" (Malalasekera [1937] 1983, 1: 641–42). Whether or not it was a real place, and irrespective of whether the Buddha actually went there, it is fascinating that the early Buddhism[101] would present the Buddha going so far out of his way. Whether it was to tame some unrefined Brahmins of the Kuru country, to tame a cannibal who haunted that country, or to find the right audience there for his subtle teachings, we find his chief text on mindfulness in a meaningful interetextual context that is of interregional interest. It is as if he leaves "greater Magadha" to bring subtle Buddhist *dhamma* theory to the rough and tumble attractions of the Vedic heartland.[102]

B.I.D.ii. ESTABLISHING MINDFULNESS. The term in the Sutta's title, *satipaṭṭhāna* (Sanskrit *smṛti-upasthāna*), is usually taken as "foundation of mindfulness" (it can also mean "way of establishing mindfulness" or "domain of mindfulness"). The Buddha says there are four such foundations: "A monk dwells watching the body as a body, watching feelings as feelings, watching mind (*cittā*) as mind, and watching *dhammas* as *dhammas*. In each case, he is to be "ardent, fully aware, and mindful." Thus if one is distracted from sustained attention on the body as body to watching feelings as feelings, he should be aware that he has moved on to feelings (Nyanaponika Thera [1962] 1979, 132 n. 2). In this sense the four "foundations" are thus "domains."[103]

The *sutta* describes twenty-one exercises, fourteen of which focus mindfulness on the body, one each on feelings and thoughts, and five on *dhammas*.

100. The only (seemingly pertinent) information I find by an internet search is a brief mention in Loomcharoen 2007, 16: "Individual moral development through *bhāvanā*, for example in *Kuruvatta-Dhamma*, begins with the observation of the five precepts as the basis for the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*, to finally make that observation and practice common, routine, a way of life." At "*Kuruvatta-Dhamma*" there is a note citing *Jātaka* 3.368 with commentaries, but I have not been able to follow that up.

101. And not only the Theravāda; Strong 2007 mentions a *Divyāvadāna* account of the story of the first Mākandiya where the town is named Kalmāṣyadamya. Cf. Watanabe 1909, 243–70 on the story's appearance in Many Sanskrit Buddhist texts; 284 n. 4 on the town's name as reconstructed from Chinese translations of it.

102. On Kuru country as the central region of Brahmanical *dharma*, see Macdonell and Keith [1912] 1967, 1: 165–69. On "greater Magadha," see Bronkhorst 2007. "Some scholars" locate Kammāsadhamma "in the vicinity of modern Delhi" (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, 1188). If *Kuruvatta* implies Sanskrit *Kuruvarta*, it could, like Brahmāvarta or Āryāvarta, suggest a sacred land of *dharma* (cf. *Manu* 2, 17–22).

103. I have been following mainly Gethin's terminology (2004, 520), notably with "watching" for *anupassati*, along with the translation and notes in Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi [1995] 2005, 145 ff., 1188 ff. Henceforth I mainly use the latter translation. As Gethin 2004, 529 indicates, *anupassati* can be also translated as "contemplating" (as is done by Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, Nyanaponika Thera [1962] 1979, and others). Beyer 1974, 90 ff. favors "observing." The verb has a visual implication and is used in an active sense (thanks to Greg Bailey on the latter point; personal communication, December 2006).

Each exercise is followed by a discussion of the insight to be developed as one deepens understanding. Yet there is also a continuing refinement in focus, since, although *dhammas* come fourth, they are mentioned in all the intervals on insight. Keeping the now familiar opening phrasing (it is in these insight intervals as well as at the beginning), I call attention to the one instance of *dhamma(s)* that recurs in all the insight sections by italicizing its translation "phenomena." As the monk has dwelt "watching the body per se," "feelings per se," and "thoughts per se," so now:

> Thus he dwells watching *dhammas* per se [in three ways]: first, he dwells watching *dhammas* within himself, or *dhammas* outside of himself, or *dhammas* both inside and outside himself;[104] second, with regard to *dhammas*[105] he dwells watching the *phenomena* of origination (*samudayadhammā*), or passing away, or both origination and passing away; third, he sustains the awareness "this is a *dhamma*"[106] in so far as wisdom and recollection allow, and remains detached, not clinging to anything in the world.[107]

In the second way of watching, most translators take *dhamma* in *samudaya-dhammā* as referring to "*dhammas* plural." But it is possible, given the stock usage we have noted of the same compound, to take it as a singular and translate it as "having the nature (*dhamma*) of arising *and* passing away."[108] This is plausible. But more likely, it is a case of contextual juxtaposition and overlapping meanings, such as one finds particularly with regard to the two meanings "nature of" and "*dhammas* plural" in contexts dealing with or implying (as is the case here) dependent origination (see Warder 1971, 284, 286, 288). The usage probably occurs through all the intervals on insight in anticipation of *dhammas* being the fourth foundation of mindfulness. For the momentum of the *sutta* is to break things down from the most solid, the body, to the most insubstantial and evanescent, *dhammas*. Thus commentaries turn to this *sutta* to illustrate that *dhammas* are without essence, lifeless, and empty. In any case,

104. As he did when focused "on his own body, or on the body of another"/ "on his own feelings, or on the feelings of another"/ "on his own thoughts, or on the thoughts of another."

105. Likewise, as with the body, etc.

106. Likewise, as he did, "this is the body, etc."

107. Beyer 1974, 90–99 has for the third way the felicitous, "And he establishes the mindfulness that 'This is an event' ['a body' etc.] just sufficiently for a bare awareness & bare mindfulness of it; and he dwells in freedom and does not cling to anything in the world." But Beyer's translation reads as if the three ways were simply cumulative rather than also distinct.

108. As does Bodhi (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi [1995] 2005, 1191 n. 144), who, for the second and third editions of this translation, notes that "[a] plural sense . . . is not mandatory," and offers the view that "it is more consistent with the use of the suffix *-dhamma* elsewhere to take it to mean 'subject' or 'having the nature of.' " In Bodhi's new translation, what the monk watches in the body, etc., is thus "its nature of arising" and "its nature of vanishing."

we find that through all these iterations, this second way of watching, no matter what one is watching (from breathing to corpses to feelings, thoughts, or *dhammas*), refers to a way of watching *dhammas* arising and passing away, or in more common terms, watching "phenomena" or "events" in their "rise and fall." In the five exercises that come under the fourth foundation of watching *dhammas* as *dhammas*, all this is practiced with regard to the five hindrances, five aggregates, six sense-fields (which include mind, and being aware of the mind as the sense base for *dhammas* as "thoughts" or "ideas"), seven limbs of enlightenment (which include the "discrimination of *dhammas*"), and four noble truths (which include a reiteration of the four endeavors of right effort). This closing section on the four noble truths is climactic. As Nyanaponika Thera says, it unfolds the four truths "in terms of the actual Satipaṭṭhāna practice," particularly as regards the reassurance offered that the "act of mindful noticing will necessarily stop the continued flow of craving; because detached observation and craving cannot go together" ([1962] 1979, 134 nn. 37 38).

In raising the question of what it means that "a monk dwells watching *dhammas* as *dhammas*," Gethin remarks that at least for the first four topics, "[c]learly . . . *dhammas* are not teachings, practices, truths, or laws," and that even with the inclusion of the four noble truths, it is not a matter of "doctrinal propositions, but realities that have to be understood" (2004, 520–21). That is well said. But eventually Gethin comes back to "practices" as one of "two basic meanings of *dhamma* in early Buddhist texts: the practices recommended by the Buddha and the basic qualities that constitute reality. The first takes *dhamma* as something normative and prescriptive, and the second as something descriptive and factual. Both of these meanings essentially derive from pre-Buddhist usage but both are adapted to the specifics of Buddhist thought" (534). Gethin has built this up from his understanding that such meanings are "developed" from Vedic and Brahmanical ones (531–32). I think he is right in one case but not in the other, but that, in any case, he offers a misleading dichotomy. The derivation of "basic qualities" from the *bahuvrīhi* usage of *dharma* at the end of compounds is, as we have seen, unexceptionable and important. But the Buddha and early Buddhists are just continuing to deploy a feature of Indo-Aryan linguistic usage rather than deriving a meaning from the past.[109] On the other hand, I do not think one can trace a sense of "practices" back to the *ṚV* on the grounds that, "among its earliest uses in the plural," *dhármans* "refer to certain practices—primarily sacrificial rites—as maintaining and supporting

109. Gethin writes, "In fact this usage of *dharma* in the sense of 'property' or 'characteristic' would seem to derive directly from the Vedic usage of *dharman* to refer to 'foundational nature of a deity'" (2004, 532). Yet before this, he says, it is "a common usage in both Pali and Sanskrit and is not a specifically Buddhist usage" (518).

things—the cosmic and social order," and that "*dharmans* are therefore *prescribed* practices." Yet Gethin draws from this that Buddhism "inherited" a "plural usage of *dhamma* . . . from earlier pre-Buddhist usage, and that for early Buddhist thought *dhammas* are in the first place practices, the kinds of behavior prescribed and recommended on the authority of the Buddha"—indeed, that it is only "subsequently" that *dhamma* "comes to refer to the Buddha's teaching" (531). This is a case of filling in the gaps with a very imprecise notion—"practices"—and repeating the error of thinking that there is some kind of inherent meaning or intrinsic nature to the fact that Ṛgvedic *dhárman* sometimes occurs in the plural.

B.I.E. DISCRIMINATION OF *DHARMAS*. As indicated, mindfulness makes right effort increasingly purposeful in the soteriology of the eightfold path. In the skein of the seven members of enlightenment, "discrimination of *dhammas*" comes second between (1) mindfulness and (3) effort or energy (*viriya, vīrya*), from which one can then develop joy (*piti*), relaxation (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*)—four wholesome states (4–7), often called *dhammas*, that mark access to the first and second *jhānas*.[110] One notes that with "discrimination of *dhammas*," the order between mindfulness and effort is now reversed from that in the eightfold path. Clearly, "effort" now means continued or renewed effort. In the full sequence of these seven *bojjhaṅgas*, "discrimination of *dhammas*" thus arouses the "tireless energy" (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi [1995] 2005, 947) by which to pursue meditation.

According to Cox, "[t]he formulaic description of the discrimination of *dhammas* in the Pāli *suttas* suggests that it functions specifically through insight (*paññā*), by which one discriminates, investigates, and reflects thoroughly upon *dhammas*" (2004, 550). We find such insight or wisdom (*paññā* = Sanskrit *prajñā*) in a passage where the Buddha unfolds the full *bojjhaṅga* sequence with respect to mindfulness in breathing: "Abiding thus mindful, he investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry into it. On whatever occasion, abiding thus mindful, a bhikkhu investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry into it" (*Ānāpānasati Sutta* (*MN* 118) 31; Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi trans. [1995] 2005, 946–47). As Cox shows, however, it is the Sarvāstivādin school that articulates this practice most assiduously and in effect makes it a linchpin of its more developed *dharma* theory.

110. For example, *MN* 118.29–38. See Rahula 1974, 74–75; Bodhi 2000, 1910. See also n. 91 above regarding additional *dhammas* that apply here.

B.2. Dharmas and Abhidharmas

Here we must shift our focus from the Nikāyas to "Nikāya Buddhism." For with the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma and that school's commentarial discussions, we meet not only the classical *dharma* theory among the schools of "Nikāya Buddhism" but the handling of this topic that was most directly critiqued by the Mahāyāna (see Williams 2000, 92–95). Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma also makes the connection between "wisdom" and "discrimination of *dharmas*," even offering the meditator a new "controlling faculty of insight" (*prajñendriya*).[111] As Cox says, "Abhidharma itself is defined as insight (*prajñā*), which is then identified with *dharmapravicaya* that discriminates *dharmas* according to their intrinsic nature [*svabhāva*], or according to their particular inherent (*svalakṣaṇa*) and generic characteristics (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*)." The activity of *dharmapravicaya* is "compared to the skill of a jeweler who can recognize and distinguish any stone," or to selecting the right flowers. And as insight, "it becomes the sword that cuts off defilements preventing them from ever rising again." The "early Sarvāstivādin texts" thus clarify how "the discrimination of *dharmas* acts by separating and clarifying *dharmas* of all categories, in particular by distinguishing events that are unvirtuous and result in suffering from those that are virtuous and lead to liberation; the former are to be abandoned, and the latter are to be cultivated."[112] In this regard, as Cox shows, the Sarvāstivādins extend "discrimination of *dharmas*" far beyond the practice of the seven members of enlightenment to the point of making it the grand trunk road to right views "as the first stage in a standard series of mental cultivations that culminate in the faculty of discerning (*vipaśyanā*)" (550–51). This, of course, redefines the scope of what is called "insight meditation" (Pāli *vipassanā*), by which, however, in either school, one can discover "the way things really are" (*yathābhūtam*) (see Gethin 2004, 549; cf. Williams 2000, 81). As Williams (88, 91–92) demonstrates, "seeing the way things really are" is the general goal of the Abhidharma and is primarily a goal of insight meditation.

As we saw in chapter 2, there is some suggestion in the Aśokan edicts that Aśoka was familiar with facets of Abhidharmic *dharma* theory. Among the

111. Cox 2004, 550, 580 n. 29. This would be beyond the basic six *indriyas* (the five sense organs plus mind). Also highly interesting in another list is the inclusion of femininity, masculinity, and the life force among twenty-two *indriyas* in a position between the five sense organs and the mind—there, because these "controlling faculties" "further qualify the final corporal sense of the body" and "determine the affective quality of mental events" (552, 581 n. 43). Since they are between body and mind but apparently both, they however do not qualify as "dissociated forces"—*dharmas* that are neither physical nor mental (on which see § B.2.a). It would be interesting to know what lies behind this Sarvāstivādin gender theory.

112. Cox 2004, 550. A Mahāyana Perfection of Wisdom view rejects discrimination of *dharmas*: "A Bodhisattva should therefore be trained in non-attachment to all dharmas, and in their unreality—in the sense that he does not construct or discriminate them" (*Mahāprajāpāramitā Sutra* part 1, Conze trans. 1961, 98 (1, 4, 13), as cited by Halbfass 1992, 64 n. 27.

schools whose Abhidharma differences are sometimes traced back to the Third Council under Aśoka are the proto-Theravāda Vibhajyavādins and the Sarvāstivādins (see Lamotte 1988, 273–74, 277). The sense in which these and other schools speak of *abhidharma* on top of *dharma* certainly marks a refinement within Buddhism that can be only partially traced from the Nikāyas. Where the latter use the term *abhidhamma*, "they do not mean to designate any scriptural code, but simply the 'Special Dharma', i.e. the Doctrine pure and simple, without the intervention of literary developments or the presentation of individuals. When understood in this sense, *abhidhamma* is often coupled with the word *abhivinaya*" (Lamotte 1988, 180).[113] Abhidharmic "tendencies," on the other hand, can be better traced through Nikāya usages of the term *mātikā* (Sanskrit *mātrika*) for the "matrix"-type lists of *dhammas* we have noted in some *suttas*. In this fashion, *MN* 33.9 seems to mention three types of monks: those "who maintain the Dhamma, the Discipline, and the Codes" (*mātikās*) (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi [1995] 2005, 314). We probably see here an anticipation of what will be called the "three baskets."

For our purposes, which are to offer a sense of this new refinement, it must suffice to look briefly at what the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins do not have exactly in common,[114] but at what underlies their differences, as a way of getting at what Abhidharma refinements amount to in historical and everyday language. I will consider a few topics for which the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma is famous from this vantage point.

B.2.A. SĀRVĀSTIVĀDIN *DHARMA*-ONTOLOGY. First, let us look at some topics that have already made their way into our discussion, beginning with the relation between Abhidharma and insight meditation. According to Williams, in "seeing dharmas as events (*dharmas*)" (i.e., "watching *dhammas* as *dhammas*"), all schools were concerned with seeing them "as based perhaps on an event-ontology, rather than on a substance-ontology. . . . To that extent, one could argue, the everyday practicalities of insight meditation remain paramount." But while the Pāli Abhidhamma left "specific questions of the ontological nature of dharmas" "relatively unexplored," such an "interest" was found "among Sarvāstivādins and their rivals" (2000, 92). This ontological interest promoted an intensified preoccupation with taxonomy via "analytical matrices (*mātrika*) or lists of categories which themselves constitute the *dharmas*"

113. See, however, Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi [1995] 2005, 1226 n. 362, agreeing with Watanabe 1983, 34–36, who, in Bodhi's words, "concludes that the Buddha's own disciples formed the conception of Abhidhamma as an elementary philosophical study that attempted to define, analyse, and classify dhammas and to explore their mutual relations."

114. According to Williams, the two are "in many respects very similar" (2000, 92).

(Cox 2004, 551). According to Cox, this working up of new matrices of matrices offered “a taxonomic abstract web of all possible conditions and characteristics exhibited by actually occurring *dharmas*” (552). In this vein, the Sarvāstivādins developed a system of six causes and four conditions, which I shall return to shortly.

There are, then, lists within lists, but the most representative Sarvāstivādin list comprises seventy-five *dharmas* in a “fivefold taxonomy” (*pañcavastuka*) of five genera. Therein, one finds eleven *dharmas* of material form (*rūpa*), one *dharma* of thought (*citta*), forty-six thought-concomitant *dharmas* (*caitta*: wholesome ones like faith, unwholesome ones like anger, and other related *dharmas* that accompany thought), and fourteen “dissociated forces” (*dharmas* that are neither physical nor mental).[115] These are all conditioned *dharmas*, the total of which is seventy-two. Then there are the three unconditioned *dharmas*. This taxonomy “attempts to present a complete and systematic listing of all possible *dharmas* classified abstractly by distinctive intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*).” And quite intriguingly, according to Cox, in doing so it “takes the perspective of the *dharmas* themselves” rather than that of the meditator and his or her praxis (Cox 2004, 553). The seventy-five *dharmas* that make the cut are considered to be “primary existents” (*dravyasat*) or “irreducible simples” by the fact that they “have *svabhāva*” (*sasvabhāva*)—that is, each has its “*own*” (*sva*) intrinsic “nature” (*bhāva*). They are thereby distinguished from secondary “conceptual existents” (*prajñaptisat*) like a table or person, which are real unities for pragmatic purposes only, can be broken down, and are considered to be “without *svabhāva* (*niḥsvabhāva*)” or “empty” (*śūnya*) of intrinsic nature (Williams 2000, 93–95).

B.2.B. SVABHĀVA. Although Sarvāstivādins are most readily distinguished for a view of time in which *dharmas* have real existence not only in the present but in the past and future, they seem to get most idiosyncratic about *dharmas* in three concepts: “intrinsic nature” (*svabhāva*); one of the fourteen “dissociated forces” called “possession” (*prāpti*); and space as one of three “unconditioned *dharmas*.” *Svabhāva* is the hinge on which such differences turn. According to Cox, Sarvāstivādin commentarial tradition defines *dharmas* both etymologically and via *svābhāva* (or an equivalent term): thus “*dharma* means ‘upholding,’ [namely], upholding intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*)”; similarly, “Etymologically, ‘*dharma*’ comes from upholding a particular inherent characteristic” (*nirvacanaṃ tu svalakṣaṇadhāranād dharmaḥ*), using

115. See Cox 2004, 554: This third “category of dissociated forces (*cittaviprayuktasaṃskāra*),” a completely new one for the Sarvāstivādins, “includes *dharmas* that were proposed to account for a varied range of experiential or doctrinally necessary events and is, therefore, a miscellany of *dharmas* not unified by any overall integrative principle other than dissociation from material form and thought.” See Cox 1995.

"*svalakṣaṇa* in place of *svabhāva*" (2004, 559, 584 n. 70). With reference to "*dharmas* plural," it is interesting that such definitions derive *dharma* from formations of √*dhṛ*, which Cox translates as "upholding." But let us just note that nothing would seem to be lost, and something might possibly be gained, if we broke with this translators' convention and replaced "upholding" with "holding," which is really what √*dhṛ* basically means.[116] What Sarvāstivādin *dharmas* do "from the perspective of the *dharmas* themselves" is not really "uphold their intrinsic natures," which sounds as if the fivefold taxonomy was something like a constitution. Being utterly impersonal, such *dharmas* simply (although explaining it is not so simple) "hold their intrinsic natures." Amid the flux of "conceptual existents," the meditator can rely on them as irreducible "holds" precisely because each such *dharma* holds its particular *svabhāva*. As one watches faith or anger rise and fall, one can put a wholesome hold on the one and let the other go. In everyday English, it would be something, in the first case, like saying "hold that thought" and reducing it to "let that mental event take hold"—and in the second, something like saying "let it let itself go."

Sanskrit etymologies from √*dhṛ* are interesting in light of what I have suggested is the better part of Gethin's discussion of "two basic meanings of *dhamma* in early Buddhist texts": his discussion of "qualities"—the meaning that can be traced to usages of *dharma* at the end of *bahuvrīhi* compounds. This usage also links *dharmas* with an etymology of *dharma* by another route, but since it is the same root, it is one that amounts to the same thing. When speaking about Nikāya usages at the end of *bahuvrīhi* compounds, Gethin, as we have seen, says it "has to mean something like 'nature' or 'characteristic quality'" (518). The Pāli Abhidhamma commentaries define this meaning more precisely: "*dhamma* as the last member of a compound means the natural condition (*pakati*) of something, thus to describe someone as *jāti-dhamma* or *jarā-dhamma* means that birth and old age are his 'natural condition' (*pakati*)."[117] Whereas Gethin had initially glossed what we are calling "*dhammas* plural" as the "a basic mental and physical 'state' or 'thing'" (2004, 516), he now modifies this to "mental or physical quality." This would seem to suggest that the Abhidharmic usage is closer to the possessive compound meaning "'nature' or 'characteristic quality.'"

116. Note how Fitzgerald renders a similarly etymological *Mbh* passage: "They say *dharma* is from 'holding' (*dhāraṇād dharma ityāhur*). Creatures are 'held apart' by *dharma* (*dharmeṇa vidhṛtāḥ*). So *dharma* is whatever involves 'holding' (*yat syād dhāraṇasaṃyuktaṃ sa dharma*); that is the settled conclusion" (2004*a*, 445, modified).

117. Gethin 2004, 522; *pakati* is Sanskrit *prakṛti*, "nature," and Gethin adds that "an alternative term used by the commentaries here is *vikāra* in the sense of disposition" (2004, 522). *Jāti* and *jarā* mean "birth" and "old age"; they are also causal conditions among the twelve *nidānas* of dependent origination.

Theravāda Abhidhamma commentaries take this possessive compound meaning differently as "the natural condition (*pakati*) of something," but also use the Pāli term *sabhāva*, equivalent to Sanskrit *svabhāva*, to explain its meaning. Again, one could say that the *bahuvrīhi* usage and the *sabhāva* meaning are not different in meaning. As Warder says, not uncommonly these two meanings and usages overlap.[118] One could even say that the *bahuvrīhi* usage points to the *sabhāva* meaning. But Pāli *sabhāva* should not be translated as "intrinsic" or "inherent nature."[119] Rather, it is meant to explain that *dhammas* are called "particular natures" or "qualities" because they "hold" or "maintain" themselves in relation to causal conditions. But whether or not *dharmas* are "ontological irreducibles" or just "conditional correlatives," they have the similar quality and function of being meditational "holds."

B.2.C. PRĀPTI. Indeed, one of the Sarvāstivādins' seventy-five *dharmas* that functions most clearly as a kind of "hold" is *prāpti*, "possession" or "ownership"—one of the fourteen "dissociated forces" (*dharmas*) that are neither physical nor mental. Although it has been compared with other "pseudo-selves" allowed by different schools to explain varied facets of the personal continuum without a personal substratum or "soul,"[120] as Williams says, it is a "unique Sārvāstivadin doctrine, and once more a topic of intense debate with others." According to Williams, "This *prāpti* too is an impermanent dharma" (2000, 116–17). A series of *prāptis* explains how a bad intention keeps having a new "possession" to make the bad intention "one's own." In effect, everyone lives almost inescapably in an "ownership society"—and is bound to stay in it by their own karma. For unenlightened persons, *prāptis* are "own-its" in series. The advice, "Don't own it," is thus good Buddhist advice, and also ontologically on target, since no matter what your school, it is never "really" yours to begin with or to end with. But how do Sarvāstivādins envision getting to that end without ownership? Fortunately, for an enlightened person, "there is also a different *dharma*

118. Warder 1971, 282–84, 286: "usages overlap"; "no sharp distinction" between "elements" and "qualities"/"natures."

119. Gethin (2004, 533–34) points out that Carter (1978, 61) "has drawn attention to the way in which the Pali commentaries later come to gloss *dhamma* at the end of a *bahuvrīhi* compound both by *pakati* and *svabhāva*." For Gethin, it follows "that when the commentaries define *dhammas* as *sabhāvas* this is not a statement about their ontological status and that *sabhāva* should not be translated as 'inherent existence', but is merely a gloss stating that *dhammas* are 'particular natures' or 'particular qualities.' Moreover, . . . [to] say that *dhammas* are so-called 'because they maintain (*dhārenti*) their own particular natures, or because they are maintained (*dhāriyanti*) by causal conditions,' this should be understood, I think, as a direct and deliberate counter to the idea of *dharmas* as 'particular natures' that are maintained by an underlying substance (*dharmin*) distinct from themselves; it is not intended to define *dhammas* as ontologically irreducible entities" (2004, 534). This differentiates a Theravāda position on *sabhāva* from both Brahmanical (Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya) conceptions of substance and substratum and the Sarvāstivādin conception of *svabhāvas* as irreducible reals. See Halbfass 1992, 79, 150–51.

120. See Conze 1962, 132, and on *prāpti* and *aprāpti*, 139–41, 161–62.

present, called 'non-possession' (*aprāpti*), which keeps the negative taints from ever occurring again." It accounts for how the ownership series can lose its hold. No other schools held these two *dharmas*, and the Sautrāntikas especially, with their intensified emphasis on the "momentariness" of *dharmas*, rejected them as "unnecessary" and "absurd."[121] The Theravāda, probably outside this argument, held that there was an "inactive level of mind" called *bhavaṅga* "that is still present when no mental activity is occurring," and "that makes the link between a dying person and rebirth" (Williams 2000, 123).

B.2.D. OBJECT-SUPPORT CONDITIONS. Finally, if *prāpti* is meant to explain how certain things (*dharmas*) hold course with respect to the right effort of a meditator, there remain much larger questions as to how all things hold course with respect to each other. Here we come to space as one of three unconditioned *dharmas*. In Sarvāstivādin terms, these are *dharmas* that are permanent rather than impermanent, "free from arising and passing away or modification," and lacking any "generative cause or dependence upon a collocation of causes and conditions, as well as any activity that generates its own effect" (Cox 2004, 555–56). Whereas the Theravāda Abhidhamma allows for only one unconditioned *dhamma*, *nibbāna*, the Sarvāstivādins introduce space (*ākāśa*) as the third in the company of two types of *nirodha* or "cessation" (instead of one *nibbāna*), which they call "cessation resulting from consideration" (*pratisaṃkhyānirodha*) and "cessation not resulting from consideration" (*apratisaṃkhyānirodha*).[122] Cox raises the pertinent question: if they are neither conditioned nor condition other *dharmas*, "what then do unconditioned *dharmas* 'do?'" Here, like some other recent scholars, Cox emphasizes the "function" of *dharmas*, how *dharmas* "function" both specifically and in general, and how the universe "functions," given *dharmas*.[123] Cox insists that unconditioned *dharmas* "do indeed have a function, and, as in the case of other impermanent, conditioned *dharmas*, this function is the basis that determines their distinctive character and hence both their status as *dharmas* and their existence" (Cox 2004, 556). The distinctive function of space, linked to its existence and knowability, is "not obstructing." Space can be known by *reductio*-type inferential arguments called *prasaṅga*.[124] Among these, the **Mahāvibhāṣā*, a text from about the second century CE, credits its chief Sarvāstivādin proponent with saying, "since one observes that there are places without obstruction, one knows

121. Williams 2000, 118. With twenty-four or ten additional *dharmas* in the "dissociated forces" category, the Yogācāra kept *prāpti* but discarded (or perhaps better, abandoned) *aprāpti* (Takakusu [1947] 1956, 96a).

122. Cox 2004, 556. For an explanation of these two types of *nirodha*, only the first of which is nirvāna as "due to the comprehension, by wisdom, of the four holy truths," see Conze 1962, 162. The Yogācāra Abhidharma adds two more types of *nirodha* plus *tathatā*, "suchness," to make six unconditioned *dharmas* (Takakusu [1947] 1956, 96a).

123. See Cox 2004, 555–58, 571–74, 576–78; Gethin 2004, 535: "a functional concept."; Skorupski 1987, 334.

124. Since the Buddha also speaks of space, it also has scriptural authority.

that space definitely exists as a real entity (*dravyatas*), because it is precisely space that has the distinctive function of non-obstruction [*anāvṛti*] as its characteristic."[125] This argument has an interesting extension when Saṅghabhadra, perhaps two centuries later, "suggests that space as an unconditioned *dharma* functions to provide a place for light; the cause (space) which exists as a real entity in intrinsic form, is manifest by means of this effect (the appearance of light). . . . If there were no space, there would be no light. Since there is light, distinctions in material form are grasped by visual perceptual consciousness. Therefore, space exists because it is able to provide a place for light, and so forth. It is proven that space exists as a real entity" (Cox 2004, 586 n. 64). One is reminded of the Vedic "ontology of openness" that opens spaces (*varivas*, etc.) for light, worlds, and all other phenomena by removing "The Obstacle" personified as the demon Vṛtra. As Halbfass says, although an "ontology of substance" may be more conspicuous in later Brahmanical thought, the "ontology of openness should by no means be underestimated" (1992, 32). Indeed, it could be said that with the example of light, Saṅghabhadra's additional argument recalls an early Vedic outlook. But that is not the stated focus. Rather one may note how down-to-earth and practical Saṅghabhadra's concern with space and light is. It is really the mental space to deal with immediate stimuli. The "and so forth" is perhaps the only hint that this comment could have reference to light-bringing celestial bodies.[126] The argument also positions this Buddhist view over and against most forms of Brahmanical scholastic thought, which view space or "ether" in a continuum of unfolding substance that conveys sound rather than light.

And how do conditioned *dharmas* function in relation to unconditioned *dharmas* (including space) in such an open space that includes mental space? Here we come to the Sarvāstivādins' system of causes and conditions. Although Theravādins listed as many as twenty-four conditions (*paccaya*) and as few as four, many of which are found by name in the Sarvāstivadin lists of causes and conditions, the Sarvāstivādins refined matters to six causes (*hetu*) and four conditions (*pratyaya*; Pāli *paccaya*)[127]—even though, as Lamotte mentions, they acknowledged "the synonymity of the words" *hetu* and *pratyaya*. Lamotte offers a pithy summary: "The general principle is that all dharmas are causes with

125. Cox 2004, 557, 582–83 n. 59; Williams 2000, 113–14, 289. The asterisk indicates that the work is known only in Chinese translation. The same applies to the *Nyāyānusāraśāstra* of Saṅghabhadra, cited next.

126. Cox returns to Saṅghabhadra, for whom "the term *dharma* does not denote a permanent substance, but rather a cognitive category, an objective locus identifiable through cognition. The world exists only as cognized, and the regularities of this cognized world that are evident in the given objects (*dravya*) of our experience are expressed through its constitutive *dharmas*" (2004, 578). Once again we come back to Warder's understanding of *dharmas* as "regularities" in what Halbfass (1988, 317), endorsed by Gethin (2004, 535), calls "a certain elusive coherence."

127. Cox 2004, 557 n. 66; cf. Lamotte 1988, 605; Williams 2000, 115–16, 258–59 n. 7; Hirakawa 1990, 179–84.

respect to all the conditioned dharmas, with the exception of themselves, because no dharma constitutes an obstacle to the arising of dharmas which are susceptible to arising" (1988, 604). Obviously, it is important that conditioned *dharmas* are causes with respect to each other and yet do not get in each others' way, but Lamotte leaves it to be explained how all *dharmas* including unconditioned *dharmas* function in this manner.

As regards space, one of the six kinds of causes and two of the four kinds of conditions are revealing on this point. The important cause is called the *kāraṇahetu*, which Cox translates as "non-obstructing cause,"[128] and the two conditions are called the "object-support condition" (*ālambana-pratyaya*) and the "sovereign condition" (*adhipati-pratyaya*). According to Cox, "in clarifying precisely what it is that space 'does,'" the **Mahāvibhāṣā* states, "'Space is unconditioned and lacks any generative activity to produce an effect. However, it does function as the sovereign condition (*adhipati-pratyaya*), that is, as a non-obstructing condition with regard to the various material elements of space.' The **Mahāvibhāsā* thus delineates a series of sovereign conditions, beginning with this non-obstructing function of space . . . and ending with thought and thought concomitants" (Cox 2004, 57).[129] This progression, allowed by the unconditioned *dharma* of space, of non-obstructed sovereign conditions back to thought itself is reminiscent of Ṛgvedic enigmas concerned with the "sources of *dharma*," where *dharma*'s source and unfolding is located in the regulated minds of the Ṛṣis. Moreover, with the "object-support (*ālambana*) condition," we find this Buddhist text linking the non-obstruction of *dharmas* with a meditational "object support" in a fashion similar—other than that it is without substance or substratum—to the usage of *ālambana* along with Death's "subtle *dharma*" of the Self in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*.

An "object-support condition" (*ālambana-pratyaya*) is also mentioned as *ārammana*, "object," among the up to twenty-four "conditions" (*paccaya*) enumerated in the Theravāda Abhidhamma (Lamotte 1988, 605; Gethin 2004, 527), where it can also describe the "object" of the consciousness of the nine "transcendent *dhammas*" (*nava lokottara-dhammā*, *navavidha-lokottara-dhamma*) that include the one unconditioned *dhamma*, *nibbāna*.[130] And it has some other

128. Cf. Williams 2000, 116, 259–60 n. 7, who translates it as "efficient cause," which "consists of every other dharma apart from the dharma that is the effect itself, inasmuch as every dharma either contributes directly toward bringing about a further dharma (the cause as an 'empowered' *kāraṇahetu*) or does not hinder its production (the cause as a 'powerless' *kāraṇahetu*)." Presumably, Cox is addressing how space functions in this second manner.

129. Cox continues: "The text concludes, 'if there were no space, this series of causes and conditions proceeding in this way would not be established. This fault must be avoided. Therefore, space actually exists with intrinsic form (**svarūpa*), and one should not deny it as nonexistent'" (2004, 557).

130. Gethin 2004, 527 discusses Carter, who notes some forty examples in the commentaries that say *dhamma* in the Nikāyas should be understood as referring to nine types of transcendent *dhammas*: the four stages of the path (from stream-winner to arhat) and their respective fruits topped off by *nibbāna*. "In the technical

interesting Sarvāstivādin conjunctures. As Cox shows, "[e]lsewhere the **Mahāvibhāṣā* specifies that unconditioned *dharmas* function not only as sovereign conditions (*adhipatya-pratyaya*), but also as comprehensive non-obstructive causes (*kāraṇahetu*) and as object-support conditions (*ālambana-pratyaya*). Their function as comprehensive non-obstructive causes is identical to their function as sovereign conditions: that is, in the case of all *dharmas*, unconditioned *dharmas* also function not to obstruct the arising of *dharmas* other than themselves. And in this function as non-obstructing causes, unconditioned *dharmas* function as objects of mental perceptual consciousness, but here also they do not function as the generative causes for its arising" (Cox 2004, 557–58). Here we see that space functions as a "comprehensive non-obstructive cause" and as an "object of perceptual consciousness"[131] that does not, however, generate its arising, in the same manner as the other two unconditioned *dharmas*, which have to do with cessation and thus *nirvāṇa*. If we can now say, etymologically, that *dharmas* function as "holds," we could say that space functions as a special *dharma* or irreducible "real" that holds everything and yet, in allowing everything else to hold that needs to hold, also functions to not get in the way.

Further, what is said here of unconditioned *dharmas* pertains to all *dharmas*. Even though "a given *dharma* is marked by a distinctive function in accordance with its intrinsic nature," it "can function in any of various ways, any of which implies its existence. For example, all *dharmas* function as comprehensive non-obstructing causes (*kāraṇahetu*) or as sovereign conditions (*adhipati-pratyaya*) in not obstructing the arising of other *dharmas*. *Dharmas* also function . . . in the arising of *dharmas* of the same type and as the object-support condition (*ālambana-pratyaya*) for appropriate varieties of perceptual consciousness. . . . Moreover, for the Sarvāstivādins, a *dharma*'s possible modes of functioning are not limited to the present moment. All *dharmas* can function as non-obstructing causes, as sovereign conditions, or as object-support conditions [*ālambana-pratyaya*] at any given time, that is as past, present, or future" (572). Such usages of *alambāna* as a causal condition in meditation are paralleled in the *Yogasūtra*, where Patañjali uses *ālambana* as a technical term for a "support" or "stimulus," as in: "Or [the mind-stuff reaches the stable state] by having as the supporting-object a perception in dream or in sleep (*svapna-nidra-jñāna-ālambanaṃvā*)" (1.38)—which the commentary shows could be a dreamed luminous and fragrant image of the

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language of the commentaries, this refers to the four kinds of consciousness (*citta*) that arise as" the eight transcendent dharmas linked to attaining the four paths and fruits "and lastly *nibbāna* as the 'unconditioned element' (*asaṃkhata-dhātu*), 'object' (*ārammāṇa*) of those classes of consciousness."

131. See further Cox 2004, 577–78: "for Saṅghabhadra, unconditioned *dharmas* exhibit capability as non-obstructing conditions and as object-supports [*ālambanas*] in the arising of cognition."

"Exalted Maheśvara" in a forest, from which support the yogin awakens with "undisturbed calm" (Woods [1927] 2003, 76). Here again, however, whereas a dream or sleep *ālambana* is grounded in the same ontology as the deity, a Buddhist *ālambana*, like all *dharmas*, must function in the open.

C. Vinaya Basket *Dharma*

Not everybody, of course, wants to be a metadharmician. As we have noted, the Nikāyas mention three types of monks: those who maintain the *Dhamma*, the Discipline (*Vinaya*), and the Codes (*mātikās*)[132]—a grouping that would seem to have evolved further to define specialists in each basket, as well as those recognized for proficiency in all three.[133] In the first part of this section we meet the *vinayadhāras*—"experts in law" (von Hinüber 1995, 22)—who specialized in Vinaya, the monastic Discipline. In the second and third parts we will look at two narratives that make Vinaya the lifeline of the *dharma* in time.

Strangely, many Buddhologists and Indologists who have written about *dharma* have tended to ignore the Vinaya, as if everything important that was said about *dharma* in early Buddhism was said in the other two baskets.[134] As we have seen, one still gets summaries of the Buddhist meanings of *dharma* that overlook the fact that it means "rule" with reference to the "offenses" that comprise the early monastic code.[135] Since these were rules for monastic life, they were necessarily designed to take substance within a larger society. It is thus fitting to take note of the historical context in which Vinaya has been studied, which includes its relation to Brahmanical Law. While the need to explore Vinaya's relation to *dharmaśāstra* has been recognized for some time, most scholars have not been able to say much with any specificity, and indeed some have been tempted to say much that now looks dubious because they were working with poor temporo-spatial coordinates.

132. *MN* 33.9 as cited above; see Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi [1995] 2005, 314; Gombrich 1990, 25–26.

133. One senses that the parallel has emerged with specialists in one or more Veda, as in Buddhist usage of *tevijja*.

134. See, for example, Horner [1942] 1997, xi–xiii. For a good commentary on the proclivities behind such scholarship in Buddhist (and wider studies, see Reynolds 1995, 3: "From the kind of Orientalist perspective that developed in the early phases of Buddhist studies, *true Buddhism* was not a religion that had a strong legal component. . . . 'Law,' when it was used as a translation for Dharma, was used with cosmic, philosophical, and/or ethical connotations that were never associated—in any intrinsic way—with legal systems as codes." With "emphasis on the Buddha . . . and the Dharma . . . rather than the Saṅgha . . . [t]he notion that the vinaya and vinaya commentaries constituted the textual locus of a specific legal system . . . was never seriously considered."

135. See Rhys Davids and Oldenberg [1881] 1968, 1: 3 n. 1, who remark that the translation "offences" for this usage of Pāli *dhammā* "is no doubt right in taking the word . . . in a strictly technical, legal sense. 'Offences' is however not the right direction in which to limit the general sense. *Dhammā* must here be 'Rules.'"

Scholars have been prone to work with too early dates for Vinaya and *dharmaśāstra*. As we shall see in the chapter 5, there is a recently emerging consensus around the work of Olivelle that the earliest *dharmasūtras* entail a response to Buddhist and other heteropraxies, with none of the *dharmasūtras* earlier than the Mauryas. And as regards Vinaya, a consensus seems to be emerging that the six surviving Vinayas of South Asian origins may be the latest canonical baskets to be filled, as we have them, reflecting comparatively later processes of compilation than the other two,[136] and being less reducible to an archetype than has been commonly thought.[137] Schopen estimates that all six extant Vinayas were compiled during the first and second centuries CE (2004, 79–80, 210, 212), the beginning of the "Middle period" of Indian Buddhism that marks the emergence of the Mahāyāna (see Schopen 2000, 2006, 321, 325, 345).

Scholars have also been prone to overlook the ways that both Vinaya and *dharmaśāstra* reflect locality. Here we face a somewhat counterintuitive situation. Whereas the *dharmasūtras* almost certainly come from different locales and acknowledge custom and tradition as two of the three main sources of *dharma* (the third being Veda), and even in some cases take note of regional differences, they are nonetheless, as Olivelle attests (1999, xxvii–xxviii), very hard to locate geographically since they each project a pan-regional scope for *dharma*. Surviving Vinayas, on the other hand, because they all claim to be the word of the Buddha for monks and nuns and do not legislate for society, and also because of the presumption of an original archetype for them, give the appearance of going back to a translocal common code, but actually reflect clear accommodations to local custom and tradition that cannot go back to the time of the Buddha. Schopen observes that "adaptation of monastic rule to local custom can be found in all the Vinayas," citing a *Mahīśāsaka-vinaya* passage that even justifies this:

> The Buddha said: ". . . Even if something was authorized by me, if in another region they don't consider it pure, no one should follow it. Even if something was not authorized by me, if in another region there are people who must necessarily practice it, everyone should put it into practice."[138]

136. See Schopen 1997, 25–29; 2004, 194; 2006. Schopen makes much of the lack of "evidence for Buddhist monasteries either before or during the Mauryan period" and the prevailing *vinaya* concern for ordering life in monasteries, which "did not occur on any scale until well after Aśoka, and probably nearer to the beginning of the Common Era" (2006, 316). For a tally of conventional views, see Gombrich 91–92, for whom the Vinaya would be pre-Mauryan, and thus earlier than Aśoka. His premise is that things were "added after the Pali tradition separated from the rest (which happened during Asoka's reign)" (91). Cf. Collins 1993, 335 n. 3.

137. See Clarke 2009, 24–26, 31 on questions "higher criticism" might raise regarding a Vinaya rule and accompanying story about a penance allowed for monks or nuns who have had sex that is found in all six Vinayas except the Theravāda, which, however, seems to have had such a rule (32–34).

138. From Jaworski 1929–30, 94; see Schopen 2004, 194. Cf. Schopen 2006, 317: "If the compilers of the various Vinayas considered it 'highly important' to regulate the lives of their monks so as to give no cause for

Schopen suggests that local backgrounds can also be hypothesized even in the presumably earlier *Prātimokṣa* where the six *Prātimokṣas*' greatest variance in *Sekkhiya/Śaikṣa* ("training") rules may reflect their local environments.[139] Through close scrutiny of numerous instances of local accommodations in the Theravāda and Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinayas,[140] Schopen has shown that, compared with the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya, which reflects considerable negotiation with *dharmaśāstra* as an established legal system, the Pāli Vinaya, compiled in a Sri Lankan legal environment by monks of the ascendant Mahāvihāra sect, "shows little awareness of the early and elaborate Indian legal system articulated in the *Dharmasūtras* and *Dharmaśāstras*" (2004, 210).[141]

This last point makes it unlikely that one can use *dharmasūtra* parallels or precedents to interpret features of a Theravāda *Vinaya* that reflects little awareness of Brahmanical Law. It is less of a problem to draw parallels and precedents where the Suttas relate *Vinaya* concerns to *dharmaśāstra* themes, since they would likely reflect *Vinaya* in an earlier stage of development; but still, if Olivelle is right that the earliest *dharmasūtras* are no earlier than the Mauryas, then we can date such parallels no earlier than that. We shall come back to these matters in closing this chapter on the topic of Vinaya allusions in the *Aggañña Sutta*.

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complaint to the laity, and if considerations of this sort could only have assumed high importance after Buddhist groups had permanently settled down, then, since the latter almost certainly did not occur until well after Aśoka it would be obvious that all the *Vinayas* we have are late."

139. Schopen 2004, 357–58 n. 62; cf. Prebish 1996, 263–70 on the Dharmaguptakas added rules on monks' behavior at stūpas (270). Regional variation could apply to the *Śaikṣa* rules regarding indecorous sounds made while eating alms food: the Mūlasarvāstivādins' *Prātimokṣa* has four: the sounds "cuccat," "suśaśut," "thutyut," and "phuphphuph"; the Mahāsaṅghikas' has three: "cucu," "surusuru," and "śuluśulu" (rules 38–40, rules 54–57; Prebish 1975, 100–101); the Theravādins' has two: "*capu-capu*" or "smacking the lips" and "*surusuru*" or "hissing" (Rhys Davids and Oldenberg [1881] 1968, 1: 64–65; Horner [1942] 1997, 3: 137–38; rules 50–51); and the Sarvāstivādins' only 1 (rule 73; see *Idem* 146). Locative variation would also apply to the next most varied category of *Paccitya/Pāyantika* rules. For example, the Mūlasarvāstivādins' rule 33 adds "Brāhmaṇa" and pluralizes "monks," where it limits to two or three bowls full of food the amount "many monks" may receive when they "approach families, if faithful Brāhmaṇa householders invite them." The corresponding Mahāsaṅghika rule 38 reads only, "If a family should invite a monk . . ." (Prebish 1975, 79–81); and the much shorter Theravāda rule 33 is, "Begging straight on from house to house will I eat the alms placed in my bowl" (Rhys Davids and Oldenberg [1881] 1968, 1: 63).

140. Undercutting presumptions of the relative antiquity of the Pāli *Vinaya*, see Schopen 1997, 205, 225–26, viewing of it as "in some cases 'markedly inferior' to the other Vinayas, and in some cases appear[ing] decidedly later"; Schopen 2004, 195–203 where mention of royally appointed monastic servants in the Pāli *vinaya* "may reflect . . . Śri Lankan practice" in preparing rock-cut cells, and seems to "abridge" what the *Mūlasarvāstivādin-vinaya* says; similarly Schopen 2006, 340–45. Cf. Schopen 1997, 86–96, 72–80, 84 n. 22, 205–37; Schopen 2004, 1–18, 94–96, 193–218.

141. See Schopen 2004, 81: "it is becoming ever clearer that the *Mūlasarvāstivādin-vinaya* may have particularly close ties to brahmanical concerns, and this, in turn may suggest that it was redacted by a community deeply embedded in the larger Indian, brahmanical world. It may turn out to be *the* mainstream Indian *vinaya*. Time will tell." See von Hinüber 1995, 43 n. 102 on the "new and quite unexpected light" shed by Schopen's 1994 success (=2004, 45–90) "in finding influence of Dharmaśāstra on a Vinaya," that is, that of the Mūlasarvāstivādins.

C.1. Vinaya and Prātimokṣa

Obviously, use of the name "Vinaya" for a category of the Buddha's teachings is early. Here we need two distinctions. First, one must distinguish between the early monastic code and Vinaya proper, since, although it is integral to Vinaya and to any discussion of it, the code itself, called the *Pātimokkha/Prātimokṣa*, stands textually, as a *sutta* or *sūtra*, outside the Vinaya Basket. The *Pātimokkha Sutta* would seem to have this separate status because its "liturgical" character gave it a use outside the "lists of the Piṭaka texts";[142] but one must also not discount the possibility that it may have been a prior text,[143] at least to the Vinaya proper, and one around which portions of Vinaya textual composition nucleated.[144] Second, one must mark a distinction between *developing* Vinaya and the *developed* Vinayas of "Nikāya Buddhism," such as have survived from six "Nikāya" schools.

The two main portions of the Vinaya Basket proper, the *Sutta Vibhaṅga* (*Sūtra Vibhaṅga*) and the *Khandhaka* (*Skandhaka*), which treat individual and communal rules, respectively, no doubt recall a process of developing Vinaya that would have begun early. While the *Sutta Vibhaṅga* probably nucleated around the *Pātimokkha* rules, the *Khandhaka* may have had similar though more partial grounding in the *kammavācās*—"legal formulas" that "have to be recited to transact legal business of the order," such as appointing specific monks to specific tasks and including "admission of new members to the order."[145] In the *Sutta-Vibhaṅga* ("The Analysis of the Sutta" [Prebish 1994, 20]), the Buddha explains one-by-one each rule of the *Pātimokkha-Sutta* and his subsequent riders (loosenings and tightenings) on that rule as first expounded.[146] The "casuistic" nature of the rules and their riders suggests a period beyond the

142. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg [1881] 1968, xiv–xv; "The cause which led the Pātimokkha, and the Upasampadā-kammavāka, being separately preserved at all, is the same as the cause which led to their exclusion from the lists of the Piṭaka texts—the fact, that is, of their being liturgical compositions."

143. Recall that *sutta*, as listed first of the nine "Parts" or *Aṅgas* into which the Buddha's "pre-canonical" teaching was early divided, may have referred to the *Pātimokkha Sutta*.

144. This is the standard view, which Schopen seems not to dispute (2004, 133–34); rather, he offers strategies for understanding how *Vinayadharas* found ways around or sophisticated ways through their schools' Pratimokṣa rules (*Idem*, 11–14). Cf. von Hinüber 1995, 14: "The Pātimokkha as we have it today, must have been formulated at an early date, and not by the Buddha."

145. See von Hinüber 1995, 19, stressing that "[t]he wording of these formulas is fixed exactly, down to the correct pronunciation of single sounds; for phonetic mistakes such as pronouncing a labial instead of a nasal in saṃgha versus saṃghaṃ would result in the invalidity of a legal act" (19–20).

146. See von Hinüber 1996, 13: In the *Suttavibhaṅga*, "Every single rule is embedded in a text that begins with an introductory story (*vatthu*) describing the occasion on which the rule was prescribed by the Buddha. Then follows the rule as such (*paññatti*), which may be supplemented by additional conditions (*anupaññatti*), and which may be accompanied by word for word explanation (*padabhājaniya*). Finally, exceptions to the rule are enumerated (*anāpatti* 'no offence')." Cf. Schopen 2004, 13: such "exceptions" include "exemptions, exclusions, extenuations."

lifetime of the Buddha in which case histories,[147] some "evidently invented for the purpose" (Olivelle 1974, 57), with an especially rich imaginary assembled on sex,[148] could have been assembled, and time for *vinayadhara* casuists to develop an interpretative stance to pass off their explanations of each rule and its exceptions as Buddhavacana, the Word of the Buddha.

It is here that we meet the force of Vinaya behind the formation of different "Nikāya schools": "Monks cannot co-operate in a *pātimokkha* ceremony if they do not share exactly the same *pātimokkha* code," which they (and nuns) would have ratified each fortnight as a formulary of rules that they were consensually committed to recite on these bimonthly occasions, and from which each must accept the rule's discipline for any admitted infraction. If as few as four monks disagreed with others over the rules, they could form their own *saṅgha* with a different *Prātimokṣa*; and this could eventually be perpetuated in a *nikāya* or "sect" with its own ceremony of higher ordination (*upasampadā*)—a procedure treated in the *Khandhaka*. Geographical separation clearly played its role in such variation, and doctrinal differences could accompany splits, and may have done so increasingly over time. But a split itself would be formalized via Vinaya, and "had in any case to be actualized by performing one's own *pātimokkha* ceremony" (Gombrich 1988, 111–12). As mentioned, six Nikāya schools have left extant Vinayas: one of them, the Theravāda in Pāli; and all the others in either Chinese (the Mahāsaṅghikas, Sarvāstivādins, Dharmaguptakas, and Mahiśāsakas) or Tibetan (the Mūlasarvāstivādins) translations from original Sanskrit compositions, only fragments of which survive.[149] It is noteworthy that the Chinese and Tibetan translations of these "Nikāya Buddhist" Vinayas came to be used mainly (and in Tibet exclusively) by the Mahāyana. Gombrich even goes so far as to say the Mahāyana "is not a sect, but a current of opinion cutting across sects as properly defined. There is no such thing as a Mahāyāna *pātimokkha*" (Ibid., 112). Williams goes a step further: "*There is no*

147. See Beyer 1974, 69; Holt 1983, 47, 52 ("case history after case history"); von Hinüber 1995, 35: evidence at least in the commentaries "that there seems to have been collections of precedents." Comparatively, see Olivelle 1974, 57: *Vinaya* judgments are made "on a particular case or issue at hand" in contrast to "the normal practice of Hindu law where the codes contain general laws and not casuistry."

148. Gyatso 2005, 277: "At the very least, the many lusty people and acts depicted in the *Suttavibhaṅga* bears witness to a very active sexual imagination. We find monks having sex with fresh corpses, rotting corpses, dolls, dildos, and a plethora of live partners crossing sex, gender, and species lines in every imaginable way. . . . It is certainly not impossible that some of the rules were formulated in response to things people actually did. But . . ." Cf. Clarke 2009, 35–36.

149. See Prebish 1994, 62–63 (a portion of Mahasaṅghika Vinaya); 79–80 (fragments of Sarvāstivādin Vinaya); 89 (a portion of the Mūlasarvāstivādin *Vinayavastu*). Prebish 1975 translates the Sanskrit *Prātimokṣa Sūtras* of the Mahāsaṅghikas and Mūlasarvāstivādins. According to Prebish and Nattier 1977, 238–39 and Prebish 1996, 261, the earliest split would have occurred as a result of "a reaction on the part of the future Mahāsaṃghikas to unwarranted expansion of the root Vinaya text on the part of the future Sthaviras" (from whom the other five schools derived; see Prebish 1996, 269).

such thing as a Mahāyāna Vinaya" (2000, 100, author's italics). Mahāyāna schools of thought produced new sūtras, and in the case of the Yogacāra, an Abhidharma, but they used "Nikāya school" Vinayas and are thus, in this sense, not sects. Rather, as recent research has shown, the early Mahāyāna developed its new teachings within "Nikāya school" institutions, with all that may imply about the civil character of their contending discourses on *dharma*.

Fundamental, then, is a commitment to the idea of Prātimokṣa recitation, which may indeed go back to a "pre-canonical" *sūtra* text. In order that the ongoing discussion remains clear, it is worth outlining the seven basic categories of *Prātimokṣa* rules (*dhammas*, *dharmas*) while mentioning certain rules or rule clusters that will be noticed further. The seven categories, which apply to all six "Nikāya schools," are listed in their conventional order of recitation, which moves from the most severe to the most incidental and procedural. Nuns have considerably more rules and one less category.[150] The Pāli spelling is given first and the Sanskrit second, if they significantly differ:

1. ***Pārājikā***, perhaps meaning "(suffering) defeat" or "downfall" (Prebish 1975, 11): four offenses—sexual intercourse, theft, murder, and flaunting spiritual attainments—which require expulsion from the Saṅgha.

In the Theravāda Vinaya, sex is most basically defined as "that which is not the true *dhamma*" (*asaddhamma*) and called "village *dhamma*" and "vile *dhamma*." The Buddha devises a rule that defines penetration, and thus expulsion, by the "length of the fruit of a sesame plant" (Gyatso 2005, 277–78). In the *Aggañña Sutta*, it is straightforwardly condensed among "five impossible things" as "He cannot have sex" (*methunaṃ dhammaṃ paṭiseviṃsu*) (Collins 1993, 327, 330).[151] This first rule is worth a pause because it will be important. The *Sutta-Vibhaṅga* defines it as "the one work" (*ekakamma*), "one instruction" (*ekuddeso*), "equal training" (*samasikkhātā*): the monk in communion has the same work, rule, and discipline as everyone in the community. And it is also the place where he interrogates his own memory and accountability": "Not only does a monk's sex break a law, the first rule of the vinaya. Given the way the rule against sex signifies the very being of the community, to have sex breaks the basis of law

150. Prebish 1975, 47; the category 3 *aniyata dharmas* are omitted without gender reciprocity. See Kalbisingh 1998, 2, listing the numbers of rules by the seven categories and six schools. Nuns rules are most inflated in category 1 (eight instead of four could require expulsion) and category 5 (rather than 90–92 rules requiring expiation, nuns had from 141 (Mahāsaṅghikas) to 210 (Mahiśāsakas), with the Theravāda at 166, the Dharmaguptakas and Sarvāstivādins at 178, and the Mūlasarvāstivādins at 180).

151. On "*village* dhamma" and "vile *dhamma*" (*visaladhamma*) as *Suttavibhaṅga* glosses on *asaddhamma*, see *Idem*, 278; Gombrich 1988, 61 (*gāmadhamma*). As we shall see in later chapters, Pāli *methunam dhammam* has its equivalent in the *Mahābhārata* as *maithunam dharmam*. Both traditions agree that there is a powerful force called the "law of sex" or "law of copulation."

itself. . . . The decision to refuse sex means no less than to honor the rule of monastic law altogether" (Gyatso 2005, 286, 288). Yet the Theravāda is the only school to make the rule an absolute condition for staying in the monastic community. In all the other five monastic law codes, there is an "origin tale" about a monk named Nandika whose seduction by a daughter of Māra, and his having had no thought in the aftermath of concealing the matter, sets the stage for the Buddha to establish a rule that allows a repentant monk (or nun) to be granted a "life-long penance, namely, the status of a *śikṣādattaka*," which seems to mean "one who has been granted the training (or penance)"—"a unique probationary status within the monastic hierarchy below the most junior of the monks, but above the novices."[152] This probationary status can apparently also be granted for the other three *pārājikas* as well, with there being three possible outcomes: the monk or nun "either leaves voluntarily, becomes a *śikṣādattaka*, or is banished" (Clarke 2009, 22).

2. ***Saṅghādisesa, Saṃghāvaśeṣa:***[153] Thirteen offenses calling for a probationary period of temporary exclusion from the order:[154] five deal with sexual transgressions; two with dwelling places; two with schisms; one with a monk who is difficult to speak to; and one with monks who corrupt families (Prebish 1975, 11–12).
3. ***Aniyata:*** Two offenses where a monk is accused on the testimony of a trustworthy female lay follower (*upāsikā*), whose word, as sole witness to a sexual impropriety, can be evaluated to assess whether it is a category 1, 2, or 5 offense.[155]
4. ***Nissaggiya-Pācittiya, Niḥsargika-Pāyantika:*** Thirty offenses requiring expiation and forfeiture after confession. Ten pertain to robes; ten to rugs and use of gold and silver; and ten to bowls, medicines (ghee,

152. See Clarke 2009, 8, 16—and correspondingly for penitent nuns, 3 n. 4; 8 n. 3 (I summarize mainly from the Mūlasarvāstivādin version). On Gyatso's statement (2005, 276) that sex is "the premiere downfall (*pārājika*) that ends a monk's or nun's career," Clarke 2009, 6 n. 19 comments, "Such a conclusion would have been hardly possible on the basis of the Vinaya preserved in Tibetan."

153. Prebish 1975, 12 says "No etymological rendering of the term seems to make much sense."

154. According to Prebish, the probationary period "lasted as many days as the offense was concealed" (1975, 12) and was designed for offenses that were "concealed for some time" (123 n. 33).

155. von Hinüber 1995, 10–11: "the *Suttavibhaṅga* adds (and thus at the same time mitigates the rule) that it is necessary, too, that the monk does not deny having committed the respective offense." Cf. Prebish 1975, 12: [showing] "an outstanding and somewhat surprising degree of trust in the female lay follower." A woman's testimony can determine whether the monk should be punished for a category 1, 2, or 5 offense requiring expulsion, probation, or expiation/penance. The two types are distinguished by whether the place where a monk would "sit" with a woman was secret and convenient for sexual intercourse. In this case all three categories must be considered. But if in the second case where the spot was only "suitable for speaking to her in lewd words," the first category could be ruled out.

butter, oil, honey, and raw sugar) that can be stored only up to seven days, and further rules for robes.[156]

5. ***Pācittiya, Pāyantika:*** Ninety to ninety-two offenses, numbered variously by school, requiring expiation or penance.[157] Seventy-four of ninety come under five categories: (*a*) moral rules, for example, lying (23); (*b*) conduct with nuns and other women (14); (*c*) food and drink, including rules for accepting food from lay households (16); (*d*) application of Dharma, Vinaya, and Mātṛkā teachings (11); and (*e*) use of requisites (10). The remaining sixteen break down further into behavior in the monastery (6); travel (5); and various types of destruction (5).[158]
6. ***Pāṭidesanīya, Pratideśanīya:*** Four offenses requiring confession: two concern receiving almsfood in the same place as a nun; one, taking food from a family in training; and one, taking food in a dangerous place.
7. ***Sekkhiya, Śaikṣa:*** The most disparate grouping both in the order listed and in the total number. Theravādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins, for instance, have seventy-five and one hundred and eight rules, respectively.[159] Sometimes called training rules, they are concerned with daily monastic conduct and manners, for which there will be no sanction or punishment. They include numerous guidelines for "going amongst the houses" and eating decorously.[160]
8. ***Adhikaraṇaśamatha:*** Seven rules providing procedures for resolving disputes over offenses. These include means of reaching verdicts such as majority vote by tickets; handling appeals; criteria for assessing insanity; smoothing things out with other monks and, where an offense is "connected with householders," with the laity, after harsh things were said; and a requirement that a verdict may not be carried out without the confessing monk's acknowledgment.[161]

Suffice it to say that the eighth category shows considerable experience with litigation, but this can also be detected in some of the prior categories, as will

156. See Prebish 1975, 13: "This is the first class of offenses in the Prātimokṣa in which the numbering system employed by the various schools became widely divergent."

157. Lamotte 1988, 166: "faults entailing penance"; Conze [1959] 1977, 76, "offences which, unless repented and expiated, will be punished by an unfavorable rebirth." But cf. von Hinüber 1995, 12: "The consequence of transgressing a Pācittiya are not clear." He says the term (akin to Sanskrit *prāyaścitta*, "atonement") points to a Vedic ritual background as well as to parallel usages in *dharmaśāstra*.

158. Slightly modifying Prebish's breakdown (1975, 14–15).

159. Prebish 1975, 15: 66 rules in the Chinese Mahāsaṅghika version; 113 in the Chinese Sarvāstivādin version; 67 rather than 66 in the Sanskrit Mahāsaṅghika (Idem, 148; 1996, 263).

160. See above n. 139. The Mūlasarvāstivādins add as their *Śaikṣa* rule 39, "We shall not sit down on a seat amidst the houses exposing the genitals" (Prebish 1975, 101).

161. Prebish 1975, 16–17; cf. Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi [1995] 2005 852 ff., 1311 ff.

be noted. As Vinaya begins to familiarize us with tensions between Buddhist and Brahmanical law, it introduces a number of intriguing complexities.

C.2. *Vinaya and Small-Scale Early Republics*

Gaṇa-saṅgha is a name for the small-scale "oligarchic-republican" polities that proliferated in northeast India in the early phase of the second urbanization, where their histories are reflected in narratives about the Buddha, particularly in the Suttas and the Vinaya. Their currency raises the question of whether the consensual nature of Vinaya reflects *gaṇa-saṅgha* laws and polities, such as those of the Sakyans from whom the Buddha is said to have come, and of whom he could speak with nostalgia where he defends their conduct (particularly, their nondeference to Brahmins) at their court at Kapilavatthu by telling young Ambaṭṭha, "even the quail, that little bird, can talk as she likes in her own nest." Among the implications we noted, the *gaṇa-saṅghas* were endangered during the Buddha's lifetime by the ambitions of rising monarchical states,[162] and were also headed for tension with the ways that Brahmanical Law had begun to theorize royal power in the context of *varṇa* (social class) hierarchy (see Lang 1992).

We see the first of these oppositions and probably also a glimmer of the second in a famous passage in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*,[163] where the Vajjīs, another of those ill-fated *gaṇa-saṅghas*, are in the way of King Ajātasattu of Magadha. Ajātasattu tells his Brahmin Chief Minister Vassakāra to go and tell the Buddha, "King Ajātasattu wants to attack the Vajjīs. He said, 'I will annihilate these splendid and powerful Vajjīs, destroy them, bring them to utter ruin.'" Ajātasattu orders Vassakāra to listen carefully to what the Buddha says and report back. Upon hearing this parricide king's[164] precise words, the Buddha avoids replying to Vassakāra directly.[165] Instead he asks his beloved

162. See Collins 1998, 66, 445; Thapar 2002, 137–38, 146–51—though as Thapar points out, *gaṇa-saṅghas* have a continued marginalized history at least up to the Gupta period (283–84).

163. See Gombrich 1988, 49: "according to the Buddha (or, strictly speaking, according to words attributed to him in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*), he modelled the organization of his Sangha on that of such communities as his own." As we shall see, this is at best an inference. Gombrich goes on to find no evidence of caste (*varṇa*) or for that matter kingship among the Sakyans, though they did have servants, and to suggest that they may have made age their "ranking principle" (49–50). See further *Idem*, 109: "acephalous polities" enjoined to "hold 'full and frequent assemblies.'" Collins 1998, 436 says the passage appears "in almost exactly the same form" in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (at IV 16ff.).

164. He had killed his father Bimbisāra, with whom the Buddha had already established the principle of acceding to kings in matters of *Vinaya*. When Bimbisāra once requested that the Buddha postpone his *bhikkhus*' rain retreat for a month, he accommodated him and told his followers: "I prescribe, O *bhikkhus*, that you obey kings" (*Book of Discipline* 4: 184–85; Holt 1983, 50). Bimbisāra had also asked the Buddha to preach the *dhamma* on the *Uposatha* as other *paribbājjakas* were doing, whereupon the Buddha said that it would henceforth be the time for monks to recite the *Pātimokkha* (*Mahāvagga* II, 1–5) (*Book of the Discipline* 4: 130–37; Holt 1983, 38). On treatments of the future Buddha's first meeting with Bimbisāra as king of Magadha, see chapter 13.

165. See Collins 1998, 443–44 for a fine discussion of this slight of Vassakāra.

disciple and cousin Ānanda seven times what he has heard about the Vajjīs with regard to seven aspects of their laws and conduct; and after each answer, the Buddha replies that so long as the Vajjīs continue that behavior, "one can expect them to prosper, not to decline." Finally, he tells Vassakāra that he once taught the Vajjīs these seven very things himself. Here we see the Buddha as a virtual (though only partial) law-giver to the republican-oligarchic Vajjīs, while we can assume that Ajātasattu is getting his main advice from this Brahmin, who now, as Vassakāra's probably sly response shows, tells the Buddha he sees that Ajātasattu will "not be able to conquer the Vajjīs, at least not (simply) in warfare, without deceit and (fomenting) internal dissension." Once Vassakāra leaves with, as he puts it, "a lot to do,"[166] the Buddha assembles all the monks dwelling in Rājagaha (the Magadha capital) to commend seven analogous things that will lead them to prosperity. The passage thus establishes parallels between the laws and conduct of the Vajjīs and the Vinaya code for monks, with both said to have the Buddha's authority behind them:

> (1) Just as the Vajjīs were told they should "continue to meet together in assembly frequently," so should monks; (2) both should assemble and conduct their affairs harmoniously; (3) just as the Vajjīs were not to "establish (any laws) which are not already established" or "rescind any established (law)," and should "proceed in accordance with the traditional way of the Vajjīs," monks should "not establish (any Monastic Rules) which are not already established" or "rescind any which are (already) established," and should "proceed in accordance with Training Rules as they have been established";[167] (4) both should venerate and heed their elders; (5) just as the Vajjīs should not "carry off forcibly women and girls of good family to have as their wives," monks should "not fall under the sway of the (kind of) desire which leads to rebirth, when it arises";[168] (6) just as the Vajjīs should venerate and maintain their shrines both inside and outside the city, monks should "look to (secluded) forest dwellings"; and (7) just as the Vajjīs should "provide proper guard, shelter, and protection for

166. Cf. Collins 1998, 444–45, speaking of Vassakāra's "sardonic rider" and this final remark as "dripping with dramatic irony." Collins says, "it would seem, the Buddha's remarks have pinpointed just what he needs to do to bring about what his king Ajātasattu's violent words have envisaged"; the commentary explains his conquest and absorption of the Vajjīs with just such a reading; the Buddha "spoke as he did to Vassakāra out of compassion for the Vajjīs" as a way to buy them time in the face of the inevitable (445 n. 42).

167. These are the *Sekkhiya dhammas* "pertaining to training" that form the seventh grouping in the *Pātimokkha*. See above.

168. It is suggestive that this desire is compared to marriage by abduction, which Brahmanical law will call Rākṣasa marriage. As Collins 1998, 443 indicates, it implies "celibacy for monks and thus Pātimokkha rule 1, requiring expulsion."

> their Arahants," welcoming future ones and maintaining comfortably those now in their territory, monks should "continue to establish mindfulness, so that congenial companions in the celibate life" might be welcomed to their monastery in the future and maintained comfortably there now. (see Collins 1998, 437–41, as quoted)

Set toward the beginning of the Buddha's final journey and "great decease," the passage seeks to secure the Vinaya's future while anticipating the imminent passing of the laws of the Vajjīs, which, no matter how excellent they may be as commended by the Buddha himself, are soon to be overwhelmed by a Brahminically coaxed monarchic order. As Collins says, the passage shows a "Janus-like ambiguity," for "the virtues which characterize the monastic life, or some of them at least, prove incapable of defending a lay community which adopts them" (1998, 445). The Buddha's "Janus-like" diversions recall his tacit but knowing role in bringing about the end of his own royal line, that of the Śākyas, and with it, the annihilation of their "little republic."[169]

Parallels between Vinaya and *gaṇa-saṅgha* polities have interested scholars not only in the genetic question of the origins of Vinaya, which must remain a matter of reasonable speculation, but as evidence of "democratic" trends in early Indian law. Further evidence for such trends has been sought in guilds, which may also have shared consensual legal charters and processes with the early Saṅgha and reflected some of the commercial ties of both types of associations with the second urbanization. The label "democratic" may serve to describe a countervailing tendency to monarchism, but it is at best a loose usage. Any juxtaposition between Vinaya law and secular law must acknowledge that the former, particularly as it requires celibacy, cannot be law for a whole society. In fact, the Buddha only recommends seven things to the Vajjīs, not a total legal charter. Commentaries on the *Dīgha* and *Aṅguttara Nikāyas* also speak favorably of "the old laws of the Vajjis," whose kings made widening inquiries before punishing a thief (von Hinüber 1995, 33–34). Clearly the two sets of seven things come to focus not on the transient value of the first set to the Vajjīs but on the more enduring importance of the second set to the Saṅgha. And we can see in them some of the things that make Vinaya jurisprudence distinctive. The Buddha begins with clear references to *Pātimokkha* rules—in

169. See Strong 2010, notably 13: One way to read "these various episodes in the Buddha's lifestory . . . is to see the Buddha as the terminator . . . specifically of the Śākya royal lineage. Indeed, if we are to believe the Pali Vinaya, the Buddha had a bad reputation as the ender of lines: At that time, [we are told], many distinguished young . . . noblemen led a religious life under the direction of the Blessed One. The people were annoyed, murmured, and became angry (saying): 'The Samaṇa Gotama causes fathers to beget no sons; the Samaṇa Gotama causes wives to become widows; the Samaṇa Gotama causes families to become extinct.'" He cites Rhys Davids 1882, 1: 150.

directives 1 and 2 to the rules concerning schism; in directive 3, he admonishes not to add or rescind rules and in particular to maintain the Training Rules; directives 4 and 7 offer strong reminders of *Pātimokkha* rule number 1, celibacy; and then he goes on to more general Vinaya concerns of the ongoing Saṅgha—respect for seniority; emphasis on both forest and monastic residence; and all this for the pursuit of meditation and the comfort of Arhats. Yet albeit that Vinaya law is distinctive, it remains a royal road into the complexities of both Buddhist and Brahmanical *dharma*.

C.3. Vinaya Allusions in the Aggañña Sutta

As we make our way toward Brahmanical *dharma*, it is worth making one last pause over a Buddhist text that seems to make allusions to both *Dharmasūtra* and *Vinaya*.[170] The *Aggañña Sutta* (*DN* 27) has been richly rethought and usefully retranslated by Steven Collins as "The Discourse on What is Primary."[171] It is an important text in the comparison of Buddhist and Brahmanical Law for many reasons, but most famously because it accounts in Buddhist terms for the origins of kingship. But Collins has made a major advance by detailing this text's *Vinaya* allusions (1993), while Richard Gombrich also calls attention to an intriguing *dharmasūtra* parallel in it (1992*a*, 172–74). Collins sets the *Aggañña Sutta* [henceforth *AS*] in a pre-Mauryan and pre-imperial setting mainly on the grounds that it refers to rice surpluses that would have played a part in creating the institution of kings; that it talks of the first king as a "Great Appointee" (*Mahāsammata*) rather than a "Wheel-Turning Emperor" (*Cakkavatti*, *Cakravartin*); and that it makes no reference to imperial formations, as does the *Cakkavatti-Sīhanāda Sutta*, which he thus deems to be later (*DN* 26) (306–11, 316–18, 323–24, 375, 382; cf. 1996, 422–23; 1998, 65, 89). Gombrich too sees the *AS* as pre-Mauryan. Yet I do not think either succeeds in making this *sutta* an exception to the view of Witzel and others that the *suttas* reflect conditions of about the early third century BCE.[172] Collins's key argument is the lack of reference to imperial formations, which is an argument from silence. But there is also an obvious question: Why would the first king already be an emperor?

Collins fruitfully approaches the *AS* as a parable about the fall of Beings from a "*ou-topia*, 'No-place,' and *eu-topia*, 'Good Place'" (1993, 315) into everyday

170. A discussion of the material in the section was presented at the International Association of Buddhist Studies panel in 2008. It appears in Hiltebeitel 2009*c*.

171. Collins 1993, 338–49; 1998, 627–34. It was first translated into English by Rhys Davids as "The Buddhist Book of Genesis," and often called that since.

172. See Witzel 1997*a*, 308–9, 312; Gethin 2006, 77, 82–84, discussing a proposed third- or fourth-century BCE date for the *Mahāsudassana Sutta* (*DN* 17).

Indian social conditions, and suggests that the Brahmanical tradition of *dharmaśāstra* be studied from a similar "o/eu-topian perspective" (336 n. 27). There would be something to this, but also the major difference that Brahmanical *dharma* was much more based on longstanding cultural specificities (custom, tradition, Veda) that were not only old and real to Brahmans—as the *AS* itself makes clear—but likewise all too real to Indian (if less so to Sri Lankan) Buddhists. As Collins observes, in contrast to Buddhist texts produced in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, "Indian Buddhist texts were produced in a milieu of constant endemic ideological plurality: kings, Brahmans, Jains and others all had their own hierarchical models of social relations" (1993, 325).

If then, as Collins holds, the *AS* is an especially "context-sensitive" text, and if the goal, as he holds, is a "reading" that can "be accorded historical value" (1993, 323), it is my hope that its interface of *Vinaya* and *Dharmaśāstra* will be worth another close look.

Collins thinks the *AS* "was intended by its earliest composer(s) and redactors to be a humourous parable" (1993, 314). His choice to speak of it as a "parable" is adroit, for he wants to show that it is not a "myth" that can be approached with any profit structurally (312), or as a charter myth of origins.[173] He eschews the chop-and-block methodology of the so-called "higher criticism" that licenses scholars to dismantle texts by divining their "original"[174] components and detecting later interpolations and additions, among which wrap-around frame stories are inevitably the easiest things to spot and dismiss.[175] From the start, we should appreciate the gains made by this literary approach, with its

173. Some later Sri Lankan and Southeast Asian Theravāda texts *have* taken the *AS*'s "parable," without the frame, as "a legitimatory myth-charter" (Collins 1993, 325; cf. Huxley 1996*a*, 1996*b*; Collins and Huxley 1996; Gombrich 1992*a*, 161–62, 165–66, 175–76, contrasting "myth" and "parody"). Huxley, a legal historian who persists in calling the *AS* a myth (1996*a*, 416), belittles Collins's and Gombrich's penchant for "romps thorough literary theory" (412)—on which I applaud them. Collins mentions a *Mūlasarvāstivādin-vinaya* version without the frame, but gives no detail (323–24 n. 37). There are three Chinese "versions" called "The Small Sūtra of Origins," "The Sūtra of the Four Varṇas," and "The Sūtra of Origins to the Two Brahmins Vāsiṣṭha and Bhāradvāja" mentioned by Gombrich 1992*a*, 165, whose source and study leads him to the opinion that the name *Aggañña Sutta* cannot be reconstructed as original. But these look to me like renamings. See also Nattier 1991, 11 n. 3 on these "three translations" and the various "Nikāya schools" behind the likely originals. I know of no explicitly Mahāyāna retellings, although Nattier mentions a Mongolian adaptation of its "first king" account (12).

174. See Collins 1993, 312: "the mania—which is what I think it is—for an 'Ur-text' is entirely misplaced."

175. Gombrich 1992*a*, 165 agrees in principle, but says little about the frame. Both cite and argue with several scholars on these points. For a good discussion of the issues involved in applying these methods carte blanche to Indian texts, see Nattier [2003] 2005, 49–50, despite which she recommends textual stratification to discount the frame of the early Mahāyāna *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*. Cf. Veidlinger 2006, 47–48, intent on dismissing the frame of the *Traibhūmikathā*, a Thai vernacular Buddhist cosmology, because it mentions numerous textual sources while Veidlinger favors a general oral milieu. The issues will recur for us in discussing Nattier's treatment of frame stories in chapter 7, and with regard to the frame stories of the Sanskrit epics and the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* in chapter 5. On the sophistication of the *Mahābhārata* frames and the cost of excising one of them, see Hiltebeitel 2006*a*. Generally, frame-removal arguments pay the cost of yielding preferential readings.

hermeneutic of reading the *AS* whole, its frame included, even presuming an initially oral composition.[176] For Collins, the *AS* "as we have it is a coherent and continuous whole, with lexical, semantic, and thematic elements common to both the parable of origins and its frame" (324).

Taking *aggañña* to mean "what is primary,"[177] from *agga*, "first, primary" (= Sanskrit *agra*), Collins shows correspondences between these terms and two other "key-words": *seṭṭha*, "best" (= Sanskrit *śreṣṭha*), and the prefix *brahma-*, which "allows puns on the name of the Brahmanical god Brahmā" (331–32, 332). Through these "key-words" he focuses in on the question of *vaṇṇa*, which (like Sanskrit *varṇa*) ranges in meaning from social class to color, complexion, good looks, and "appearance," with all these senses reinforcing each other (332–34; cf. Gombrich 1992*a*, 163). Yet although Collins traces another thread through the same skein, he does not scrutinize it as closely as I believe it deserves. Let me call this thread "the housing problem," taking in representations of householders, houses, and leaving home. Clearly, in a text where the Buddha repudiates the reported view of Brahmins that they are the best (*seṭṭha*) social class (*vaṇṇa*) by saying that ascetics (*samaṇas*) are "what is primary" in regard to *vaṇṇa*, and further that Arhats are "what is primary" among beings, householders are not "what is primary." Indeed, across "Nikāya schools," the cardinal Prātimokṣa rule about "no sex" would seem to make not having sex less important than not being a householder.[178] Yet what is distinctive about the *AS* is not a repudiation of the primacy of Brahmins, whom the Buddha undermines—often with a certain ambivalence[179]—right and left in other texts. Rather, in a narrative thread taken dramatically and pungently from the frame through the parable, what the Buddha undermines is a view that connects the "bestness" of Brahmins to the ideal of the householder.

We have met *mahāśāla/mahāsāla* Brahmins earlier in this chapter; they are certainly householders, and the term has even been translated that way (Black 2007*a*, 72). But that is a backreading. In both the Upaniṣads and the Buddhist

176. Collins 1993, 324; cf. 331, 378. Cf. Gethin 2006, 81, 86, crediting Collins on "understanding these suttas as redacted wholes," while also arguing that repetition is an oral element in the *Mahāsudasana Sutta* (93, 99–100). Cf. Manné 1990, 81: "If one accepts the antiquity the category of Debate suttas, then one must accept that long suttas are not necessarily amalgams of 'bits' of the Teaching."

177. Collins 1993, 331 draws on Gombrich's discussion. Gombrich 1992*a*, 169–71 rejects a derivation from *agga-jña*, "origin-knowing" (see e.g. Walshe [1987] 1995, 407) and posits "an adjectival suffix *-ñña* formation" whereby "*aggañña* means something like 'primeval' and has nothing to do with 'knowing' " (170); it also "appears to be virtually synonymous" with *porāṇa*, which it "always immediately follow[s]. Nattier 1991, 11 n. 3 already translates *aggañña* as "primeval."

178. See above at n. 151. Cf. Gyatso 2005, 281 on the first expulsion for sexual intercourse in the Theravāda story of Sudinna, "to confront the brute fact that *he performed householder activity*—no matter what the mitigating circumstances, and no matter what his particular intention or subjective state" (author's italics).

179. See *Vāseṭṭha Sutta*, *MN* 98.27–54, 62–63, identifying the true Brahmin with the qualities of the arahant (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi [1995] 2005, 1302–3 nn. 904, 907).

suttas, emphasis is on their being landholders, not householders—the Buddhist usage being not limited to Brahmin landholders (see Bailey and Mabbett 2003, 114–16). The Brahmanical householder ideal takes shape no earlier than the *dharmasūtras*,[180] and not fully in the earliest of them. It reaches its classical expression in *Manu*, which, after proclaiming that the four *āśramas* "have their origin in the householder" and "lead a Brahmin who acts in the prescribed manner to the highest state (*paramāṃ gatim*)," concludes:

> Amongst all of them, however, according to the dictates of Vedic scripture,[181] the householder is said to be the best (*gṛhastha ucyate śreṣṭhaḥ*), for he supports the other three. (*M* 6.87–89; Olivelle trans. 2005*a*, 153)

While one can see this famous claim emerging through the *dharmasūtras*, its formation would seem to be gradual. First, we may note its incompleteness in what is likely the earliest *dharmasūtra*, that of *Āpastamba*, which says only that, based on the Veda, rites requiring the wife are superior to what can be achieved by yogic powers in other *āśramas* (*Ā* 2.23.10), and that "immortality consists in offspring" (24.1). The other early *dharmasūtras*, *Gautama* and *Baudhāyana*, make a different claim: not that the householder is the "superior" *āśrama* but that it is the *only* one, since from it alone come offspring (*G* 3.3; *B* 2.11.27), to which *Gautama* adds that it alone is prescribed in the Vedic texts (*G* 3.36). The *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*—closer in time to *Manu*—then airs a view similar to *Manu*'s, saying "Of all four *āśramas*, the householder is the best" (*viśiṣyate*)."[182] Here again we get a formulation of the *idea* that the *AS* is undermining. Yet it is only in *Manu* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*—our two staunchest Brahmanical *dharma* texts—that we find the idea expressed precisely by *śreṣṭha*, as it is in the *AS* by *seṭṭha*. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, this occurs where Lakṣmaṇa implores Rāma not to go into exile but rather assume kingship and govern: "Those who understand *dharma*, O *dharma*-knower, say that of the four *āśramas* the best *āśrama* is that of the householder (*caturṇām āśramāṇāṃ hi gārhasthyaṃ śreṣṭham āśramam*)" (*Rām* 2.98.58). In the *Mahābhārata*, Arjuna also uses the parallel term *jyeṣṭha*—meaning "elder," "senior," "best," and close in this sense to "what is primary"—when he tells Yudhiṣṭhira after the war: "Birds, beasts, and Beings are supported by householders alone, O king; so the householder has the elder *āśrama* (*tasmād jyeṣṭhāśramo gṛhī*)" (*Mbh* 12.23.5). Both epics put these words into the mouths of junior brothers to pass down the idea of the "bestness" of the householder from the Brahmin to the royal Kṣatriya householder.

180. Meanwhile, see Olivelle 2004*a*, 502–3 on the surprisingly limited mention of *dharma* in the earlier *gṛhyasūtras*, none of which exalt the householder.

181. As Olivelle notes (2005*a*, 292 n.), there is a variant reading, "according the Veda and the *smṛtis*."

182. *V* 8.14. I follow Olivelle's translation (2005*a*) here; *viśiṣyate* could also be translated "is distinguished."

Leaving discussion of the dates of these texts for chapter 5, I believe we can take *Manu* to provide us with a general reference point for Brahmanical views on householder *dharma*; and *Manu* is perhaps, at the earliest, an early Śuṅga text, according to Witzel (2006, 482), or as late as the Kushanas according to Olivelle (2005*a*, 24–25). What is most emphatic in *Manu* and *Vasiṣṭha*, where it is unquestionably a matter of Brahmins, is that in being "best," the householder attains what *Manu* calls "the highest state." As the *Vasiṣṭha* passage quickly goes on to say, if a householder, on whom "all mendicants (*bhikṣukas*)[183] depend," follows all his caste rules, a "Brahmin does not fall from the world of *brahman*/Brahmā (*na brāhmaṇaś cyavate brahmalokāt*)" (*V* 8.15–17). This brings us very close to the associations Collins notes in the *AS* between what is "best," "what is primary," and Brahmanical opinion on the primacy of *brahman* and/or the god Brahmā. Indeed, *Vasiṣṭha*'s opinion is that the "best" are those who, as Brahmin householders, support "all *bhikṣukas*."

Clearly, it is not necessary to argue that the *AS* is undermining a view datable only to such later classical *dharma* texts as *Manu* and *Vasiṣṭha*. The Buddha could be portrayed as countering something like what one finds *in nuce* in the earlier *dharmasūtras*. But if the emerging consensus on dating the *dharmasūtras* is on target, the *AS* would not seem to be countering a pre-Mauryan view of householder Brahmins. This is one piece of evidence, and I will note others, that it would not be a pre-Mauryan text.

C.3.A. *AGGAÑÑA SUTTA* FRAME AND STORY. The *AS*'s frame sets the Buddha in conversation with two young Brahmins, Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja. Names like this make them scions of two of the *Ṛgveda*'s Family Book clans. Rather exemplary converts, they are, says Collins, a "good audience" for Brahmanical allusions, and "as novices they would presumably be becoming familiar with *Vinaya* rules" (1993, 319). Early in this chapter, I mentioned this pair as appearing in two other *suttas*, the *Vāseṭṭha* and *Tevijjā Suttas* (*MN* 98; *DN* 13), as young men in an intermediate status between student and householder that would correspond to what Brahmanical *dharma* texts call the *snātaka* or "bath graduate"[184]—which would in fact qualify them to get married and *be* householders. As Collins points out, commentators portray the two as maturing from one *sutta* to the next: "after the *Vāseṭṭha Sutta* they declared themselves lay followers; after the *Tevijjā* they did so again, but thereafter . . . took the Minor Ordination to become Buddhist novices. At the start of the AS they are aspiring to become monks, hoping to take the Major Ordination," and after the *AS* "they did so and attained liberation"

183. Probably covering non-Brahmanical ascetics; and note the diminutive suffix *-ka*, which can be dismissive.

184. See § A and n. 35 above. The *Vāseṭṭha Sutta* is also redacted in the *Sutta Nipāta*; see Collins 1993, 318; Siddhatissa [1985] 1998, 70–76.

(Collins 1993, 319). Upon closer scrutiny, one finds in both the *Vāseṭṭha* (*MN* 98.7.1) and *Tevijjā Suttas* (*DN* 13.5, 8–9) that Vāseṭṭha's teacher was Pokkharasāti, a memorable character from § A of this chapter, which would presumably make young Vāseṭṭha an erstwhile colleague of young Ambaṭṭha! The beginnings of the *Vāseṭṭha* and *Tevijjā Suttas* find Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja in areas where Pokkharasāti and four other "well-known and prosperous" Brahmins are staying, and they engage the Buddha in conversation only after they have gone strolling and realized he is camped nearby.[185] Near the start of the *Vāseṭṭha Sutta*, Vāseṭṭha tells the Buddha that he and Bhāradvāja "have attained full mastery over all that the Vedic experts teach; skilled in philology and grammar, we match our teachers in recitation" (*MN* 7.2).[186] They have thus passed the same kind of curriculum as Ambaṭṭha.[187] But whereas the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* leaves its brash protagonist in a kind of limbo, these two move along.

In all three of the *suttas* involving them, Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja hear about the merits of homelessness over the encumbrances of the householder.[188] But in the *AS*, now that they are "aspiring to become monks," they are living with the monks at Sāvatthi where the Buddha is residing. Here, when they go out strolling they see the Blessed One doing the same and decide to approach him on the chance of hearing a Dhamma talk (*DN* 27.1–2). The first word goes to the Buddha:

> Monks, you were (both) born brahmins, in brahmin families,
> (but) you have gone forth from home to homelessness, (leaving) your brahmin family. Surely brahmins (must) revile and abuse you.

Right from the start, the Buddha asks what Brahmins of their own families are saying, based on their householder ideal, when their sons are transgressing that ideal as aspirants to the monastic life. This topic at the near side of the *AS*'s frame also has an elegant closure when the Buddha ends the *sutta* invoking the Ever-Virgin Brahmā—a youthful approved ascetic counterpart to the "Creator" by that name—as a counter-Vedic model of what is "best" for his two young interlocutors.[189]

185. Another is Bhāradvāja's guru Tārukkha, and the others are Caṅki, Jāṇussoṇi, and Todeyya (*MN* 98.3; *DN* 13.2).

186. Of the two, Vāseṭṭha is always the chief speaker and interlocutor, and in these two other *suttas* where he and Bhāradvāja appear in debate, Vāseṭṭha is the one whose view draws the Buddha's main comment and, in the first case, his basic agreement.

187. Cf. Collins 1993, 318: "adept in the three vedas . . . philologists, grammarians, like our teachers in (vedic) recitation."

188. Fittingly, if we take the commentators' indications of a continuous development, this theme progresses. Lightly broached in the *Vāseṭṭha Sutta* (see *MN* 11.35, 46), it is a major point in the *Tevijjā*, where "union with Brahmā" hinges on whether Brahmā is "encumbered" by marriage like Brahmins and unlike Buddhist monks (*DN* 13.31–34), Vāseṭṭha says he is unencumbered, not having heard yet of his marrying Sarasvatī.

189. Collins 1993, 377–79. In the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*, the same words occur not at the end but fittingly in the middle of the conversation with Ambaṭṭha, and not preceded by the contrast with the Vedas; see above, n. 41.

Working further into the *AS*, my purpose will be to trace the interplay in it between Vinaya allusions and Brahmanical (principally *Dharmaśūtra*) ones. I will take it that the allusions are being made to two spheres of *dharma* that are under contestation not only with regard to social class and kingship, as others have recognized, but also with regard to this "housing problem." I begin on two points were I agree with both Collins and Gombrich: (*a*) that the *AS*'s conversation about social class is based on what Vāseṭṭha reports to be the contemporary Brahmanical understanding (however indirect it may be through both Buddhist and Brahmanical filters) of the *Puruṣa Sūkta*'s verse on the origins of caste (*ṚV* 10.90.11);[190] and (*b*) that the Buddha is represented as combining seriousness with humor.[191] What Vāseṭṭha reports will in fact be no surprise to us. It is pretty much what his erstwhile classmate Ambaṭṭha represented as the views of their teacher Pokkharasāti:[192]

> The brahmin is the best class (*vaṇṇa*). . . . Brahmins are Brahmā's own sons, born from his mouth, born of Brahmā. . . . You have left the best class and gone (over) to an inferior class, since you have become wretched shaven-headed (pseudo-)ascetics (*samaṇakas*), members of some sect, (no better than) offspring of our Kinsman's [i.e. Brahmā's] feet. It . . . is unseemly, that you have left the best class. (Collins 1993, 339; *AS* [*DN* 27] 3)

The class analysis is familiar from the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*, as also its bearing on Khattiya and Brahmin rankings;[193] but the *AS* now also addresses the matter of *leaving* this "best" of birthrights, and thus raises the matter of leaving home. Hearing this, immediately the Buddha kicks in with the first signs of humor:

> Surely, monks, the brahmins are not recalling the past when they say [this]. Brahmin women, (the wives) of brahmins, are seen to menstruate, become pregnant, give birth and suck; and (so) these brahmins who say: "the brahmin is the best class . . . brahmins are

190. See Gombrich 1992*a*, 163–64, 167; Collins 1993, 349–50. Gombrich 1992*a*, 165 also thinks the transition from frame to "parable" entails a continuing parody of different Ṛgvedic hymns, from *ṚV* 10.90 to *ṚV* 10.129, which I consider less likely, and also holds that the Buddha follows this up with "garbled" parodies of passages from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (169 and nn.). Best just to rely on the *ṚV* 10.90 allusion which is virtually undeniable and, as Collins and Gombrich note, is even recognized in a Buddhist subcommentary.

191. Which Gombrich tends to describe as satire, parody, and debunking; see Gombrich 1988, 85: "a debunking job"; 1992*a*, 162 and *passim*; 1992*b*. Collins, agreeing with Gombrich's treatment of Brahmanical references, suggests that the "AS was composed in and for an educated milieu familiar with both styles of thought, one that could smile at its wit, and appreciate its serious intention" (1993, 318; see further 313–16).

192. Recall *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* 2.5, as sited above in § A of this chapter.

193. Cf. Walshe [1987] 1995, 604 n. 816. Collins takes the *-ka* suffix in *samaṇaka* to give *samaṇa/śramaṇa* a "pejorative" sense (1993, 350 n.).

> born from Brahmā's mouth . . . heirs of Brahmā," are (in fact) born from vaginas. They are slandering Brahmā, telling lies, and producing demerit. (Collins 1993, 339; *AS* [*DN* 27] 4)

Collins makes the noteworthy point that the Buddha's remark that Brahmins misremember the past (*porāṇaṃ*) "is unexpected," since Brahmins misremember not only their cosmogonic origins but their physical birth from *yonis* (which could also be rendered "wombs" or "uteruses"). The "slander" in question, as a commentarial exegesis recognizes, thus implies that Brahmins equate Brahmā's mouth with Brahmin women's sexual organs.[194] The Buddha will continue in the *AS*, as in other *suttas*,[195] to speak of what one might call Brahmins' errant and selective memories (a likely slap at the single-mindedness of Vedic oral tradition).

Soon, nearing the end of the frame, the Buddha brings these matters back to the housing problem:

> You, monks, are from various castes,[196] of various names, from various clans and various families, and (yet) you have gone from home to homelessness. When asked who you are, acknowledge that "we are sons of the Sakyan." (Collins 1993, 341; *AS* [*DN* 27] 9)

The Buddha gives those who go from home to homelessness a new birth and family,[197] if not a home.[198] Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja are now staying at a "palatial monastery . . . outside Sāvatthi" (*AS* [*DN* 27] 1.1). This implication of a palatial monastic life could be another indication that the *AS* is not pre-Mauryan.[199]

Moving on from the frame into the parable, the Buddha begins his account of what has been called "the Buddhist Genesis," whose implications for relating Buddhist ideas of *dharma* and time we shall recall in chapter 6. He starts with

194. See Collins 1993, 350–52, citing Siegel 1987, 207 for his "uninhibited" rendering.

195. See his metaphor of the "file of the blind," as discussed in § A above.

196. This seems to suggest that Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja have joined the Buddha strolling with an entourage, and indeed, that the Buddha has seized upon their joining the group to make the points he is making.

197. Freiberger 2000, 224. Collins takes the compound *Sakyaputtiyā* here as "'Sons of the Sakyan', in the sense of the monks of Gotama's order," but Freiberger doubts that meaning and says that in being preceded by *Samaṇā*, the question should be answered, "We are ascetics who belong to the son of the Sakyas" ("Wir sind Asketen, die zum Sakyasohn gehören"), that is, who belong to the Buddha. For him, the term is a sociological identity marker. Yet the passage goes on to use the additional phrase *Bhagavato putto*, rendered by Collins as "the Blessed One's own son," which according to Freiberger does convey a father–son relationship through the special quality of trust in the Buddha and his *dharma* (225), from which they "are born through his mouth" (225). Freiberger views the first as an early formulation but thinks the second offers no help in dating (2008 and personal communication).

198. See Gyatso 2005, 287: "The vinaya rules are the blueprint for the functioning of special kind of community, a denatured home for the homeles. . . ."

199. Walshe [1987] 1995, 603 reassures us that Visākhā's "'mansion' was a comparatively splendid structure, though still small to the modern way of thinking."

what "usually"[200] happens when the world contracts and "beings devolve as far as the Ābhassara world," where "they remain for a long time, made of mind," and further down to where they "die from their Ābhassara bodies" and resume coming back to this world, where "they remain for a long time," still "made of mind" (Collins 1993, 341; *AS* [*DN* 27] 10). Following Collins, the *AS* now begins to pepper its continued evolution with allusions to *Vinaya*, especially to the *Pātimokkha*. The first such allusions are to a world that would appear to anticipate perfect conditions for the sustenance of "what is primary,"[201] that is, mind-made monastic life. While there is still "nothing but water," an "earth essence" spreads out on the water that has color and taste like ghee (*sappi*), cream (*navanīta*), and honey (*madhu*)—three of the five kinds of medicine (*bhesajja*), along with oil and molasses, that a *Pātimokkha* rule (*Nissaggiya Pācittiya* 23) allows monks and nuns to store, unlike other foodstuffs, for up to a week but no longer.[202] So far the evolutionary process cannot have yielded medicine, since beings are still disembodied; rather, the filmy appearance and flavor are a temptation: "Then, monks, a certain being, greedy by nature, . . . tasted the earth-essence with his finger," pleasing himself and producing craving. Other beings did the same, and then moved on to taking big mouthfuls of it with their hands. Their mental luminosity disappeared while the sun, moon, and stars appeared along with the day, night, and seasons (Collins 1993, 342; *AS* [*DN* 27] 12). As Collins shows, tasting food with one's finger and eating large mouthfuls with the hands contravene a number of *Sekkhiya* or Training rules (316; 359–60). This turn in *Pātimokkha* allusions from primal temptation to training rules makes narrative sense when it is recalled that two novice monks are the Buddha's chief listeners.

This finger-dipping is the first decisive individual act. Through each stage in this "Fall," it is always individuals whose acts lead to a general transformation. The individualism and voluntarism of *Vinaya* Law have been recognized as contrastive features over against *Dharmaśāstra*;[203] we may relate them to other similarly contrastive features of *Vinaya* that now come into play in the *AS*'s account of ongoing social evolution: *Vinaya* law's ethics of intention, with its emphasis on choice, deliberateness, consent/refusal, and consensus (see Gyatso 2005, 282–88); its recognition that acts have consequences, not only for the acting individual but social consequences both inside and outside a group

200. Collins 1993, 341, 357 n. finds the words "suggest . . . a studied vagueness about the cosmogony here."

201. Collins calls the description of ghee, cream, and honey the first of the "verbal reminiscences of the Monastic Code (Vinaya)" in the *AS* (1993, 326).

202. Collins 1993, 341–42; *AS* (*DN* 27) 11. If they are kept and eaten longer and not discarded, it is a *nissaggiya pācittiya* requiring expiation and forfeiture (326, 329, 358). A monk or nun can eat them medicinally after noon (368).

203. Gombrich 1988, 11–16 posits a "methodological individualism" lending itself to Vinaya formation.

of actors; and especially that when making rules (not to mention laws) there will be what Gombrich likes to call "unintended consequences"[204] that will lead to the need for further rules, clarifications, and amendments.

At this point we may ask how the *AS* brings its account of this continuous Fall into what Collins calls its "central figure" and "crucial moment." For Collins this is the *Vinaya*-related "motif of 'making a store.' "[205] For Gombrich, we may perhaps locate it at the point that gets his greatest attention: the implicitly Brahmanical etymologies by which the Buddha explains the four social classes. My point will not be that a third moment should trump these two, but that the housing moment brings the *Vinaya* allusions and the Brahmanical allusions into focus together.

There is now a stretch (*AS* [*DN* 27] 13–15) where Collins finds no *Vinaya* allusions, although their reminiscence surely holds through it. The more earth essence beings ate, the harder became their bodies. Good and bad looks arose, and pride and arrogance about them.[206] The pride and arrogance made the earth essence disappear. "When it had disappeared, they came together and lamented," uttering *aho rasam*, "Alas, the essence!"—which people now say when they have "tasted something good" and mean "Ah, the taste!' They recall the original, primary word(s), but they don't understand what they mean" (13). This is the first of three etymologies that the Buddha offers to explain Brahmanical loss of memory, here along with the first collective or concerted activity of lamenting. Forgetting the meaning could represent the Buddha's perception of Vedic memorization,[207] and something that must *not* happen with the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*, especially in the recitation of the *Pātimokkha*, which concerns memory about meaning.[208] It is the first of three points where the Buddha explains how such a loss of meaning occurred. As etymologies, each ties in with those he will offer in explanation of the names of the four social classes; and all of them go back to his "unexpected" remark in the frame about Brahmins' errant memories when it comes to being born from Brahmā's mouth.

204. Gombrich 1988 (see Index, p. 237) uses this phrase with cumulative effect, most often with reference to Vinaya.

205. Collins 1993, 305; cf. 327–28 on Vinaya overtones of the "five 'impossible things' which an enlightened monk cannot commit"—one of which is storing food. Collins speaks in 1993 only of "the central figure" around which Vinaya allusions cluster. But later, he clarifies this as a "crucial moment": "the text chooses the moment when one of the beings stores food as a crucial moment in the evolution of society" (1998, 450). Actually, can there be a "crucial moment" in a continuous Fall? Cf. 329–30: "Each and every event in the degeneration of beings is in some way related to the monastic order, its ideals and its Code."

206. Collins relates these vices to "the class-pride of brahmins which began the whole narrative" (1993, 361), and suggests that Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja have "abandoned" them in seeking to become monks (330).

207. See Collins 1993, 362, "the point being that although in general brahmins do not remember the true account of 'cosmogony', when they say this phrase they do recall one small part of it (without understanding)."

208. See Brough 1962. Ānanda does not bother over hearing a verse recited in which the words have changed but the meaning seems to have remained more or less the same.

When the earth essence disappeared, a "fragrant earth" then appeared like a mushroom, which again had a color and taste like ghee, cream, and honey. But after beings had lived on it for a long time, further hardening their bodies and developing pride and arrogance in their increasing good looks and despising those who were increasingly ugly, the fragrant earth likewise disappeared and "a (kind) of creeper appeared" (14). This no longer had the "earth essence" and the "fragrant earth's" look and taste, which had motivated the first decisive act of "finger-dipping" and the first "craving." Beings started to eat the creeper, which after a long time disappeared under the same conditions as the earth essence and the fragrant earth. "When it had disappeared, they came together and lamented 'we've had it, the creeper has given out on us!'" And again, though people nowadays use the phrase when "touched by some hardship," they forgot the meaning (15; Collins 1993, 342–43).

That is the second of the three etymologies that the Buddha offers to explain a "primary" loss of memory, and again it comes with the collective or concerted activity of lamenting. The *AS* has now been triple-telling in two converging ways.[209] Having come through two instances of concerted activity and loss of memory, and having perhaps caught the deepening *Vinaya* and Brahmanical reminiscences through the three cycles of body- and *vaṇṇa*-differentiation now completed, a listener would be within rights to suspect that the Buddha has been building up to a breaking point. Like Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja, such a listener could ask: What could possibly happen next after three rounds of increasing pride and arrogance about the beauty and ugliness of solidifying bodies?

This brings us to the stretch where Collins and I each find our central moments, neither of which is the first sex act but both of which follow from it. With the creeper gone, rice appeared without cultivation; "harvesting was unknown." Living off rice for a long time, more good and bad looks came about, bodies became even solider, and "the female parts appeared in a woman, and the male parts in a man;[210] the woman looked at the man with intense longing, as did the man at the woman." An "intense, excessive longing" led to "burning passion" and "burning on their bodies; because of this burning they had sex." For the first time the individual act that changes things takes two individuals.

209. See Gombrich 1992*a*, 171, observing that the same cycle of increasing body solidifications and *vaṇṇa* differentiations has now occurred three times "for no apparent reason"—for which he tries, I think implausibly, to explain the foods as allusions to Upaniṣadic cosmogony and Vedic ritual (165, 172, 178 nn. 39–41), while dismissing the more solid point that, "True, the Buddhist texts tend to say things three times. . . ." (171).

210. According to Buddhaghosa's rendition in the *Visuddhimagga* (418 = 12.50–51), the body orifices were opened by urine and excrement that resulted from digesting rice; see Collins 1993, 365, remarking, "presumably the previous foodstuffs were too ethereal for such a result."

For once the Buddha does not say it took a long time. As Collins shows, what is being described would reach (aspiring) monastic ears as a reminder of *Pārājika* and *Pātimokkha* rule Number 1: no sex.[211]

> When the other beings saw them having sex, some threw earth (at them), some threw ashes, others cow dung, (saying) "Away with you and your impurity, away with you and your impurity!" "How could a being do such a thing to another being?" So nowadays, people in certain areas, when a bride is being led out, throw dirt, ash or cow-dung. They recall the original, primary (actions), but they do not understand what they mean. Monks, what was thought *adhamma* at that time is nowadays thought [to be] *dhamma*. At that time the beings who took to having sex were prevented from entering either small or large settlements for a month or two. Accordingly at that period of time those who indulged excessively in that which is not the true *dhamma* (*asaddhamme*) took to building houses to conceal it. (Collins 1993, 344, slightly modified)

Then a being who was "lazy by nature" started storing rice for a day for both evening and morning, and others imitated him; each time someone added another day of storing until someone did it for eight days, thus contravening the *Vinaya* limit of seven. After this, grain no longer regenerated; it required harvesting; and "rice stood in a clump."

The first sex act thus leads to houses,[212] living in houses leads to food storage, and food storage leads to the depletion of miracle-grow rice and the necessity of human labor. As Collins points out, sexual differentiation has overtaken *vaṇṇa* pride in defining stages in the Fall (365), but *vaṇṇa* differentiation has continued to be reinforced by good and bad looks and will next be furthered by division of labor, and each *vaṇṇa* will presumably want its own houses. To put it simply, making houses accounts for the first householders and explains the bifurcation of the "original *saṅgha*" into two model communities. There are those who, as "what is primary," have now set precedent for the *saṅgha* that will recall such "primary" ways when a Buddha appears and rules that sex, storing food for over seven days, and taking meals after noon are breaches of *Vinaya*. And there is now a new secondary community, proto-Brahmanical we could say, anchored in the ways of householders who store food for as long as they want, who eat breakfasts and

211. See Gyatso 2005, 280: "It is much more plausible that what really made sex with a woman worse than any other kind was its practical upshot: marriage, children, the householders life. . . ."

212. Collins 1993, 326: *agārāni . . . kātuṃ*; 368: "given the references to houses (plural) here, one must assume that . . ., again by narrative ellipsis, the practice has spread to others."

dinners, and who will continue the process of *vaṇṇa* differentiation that has been under way long before this sexual revolution in the form of good and ugly "appearances."

Collins is attentive to this housing moment: "Making houses . . . contradicts the fundamental symbol of monastic life, 'going forth from home to homelessness' (*agarasma anagāryaṃ pabbajā*)" (1993, 326). Indeed, his first book, *Selfless Persons*, offers a pertinent section on Buddhist "House imagery" (1982, 165–76), with a subsection on "Leaving home for homelessness" (167–71) that includes a summary of our sequence:

> The connection of ideas is expressed in the comic evolution myth of the *Aggañña Sutta*, which satirizes Brahmanical cosmology. When first the characteristics distinguishing male and female appeared, sensual passion for each others' bodies arose in some beings, and because of this [when?] they began to indulge in sexual intercourse, other beings, disgusted, stoned them and forced them to build houses to conceal their immorality. (Collins 1982, 169)

Although "stoned them" is not quite accurate, and also less funny (they only threw dirt, ash, and cow dung), Collins had already found the *AS* humorous. Having not yet discovered its *Vinaya* allusions, he treated the housing problem as central. But having since discovered the *Vinaya* allusions, he gives the housing moment a Buddhist "symbolic" explanation only, without noticing that society has evolved the leading institution of dharmaśāstric Brahmanism.

C.3.B. SLY ETYMOLOGIES. Inevitably, the devil is in the details, and I limit myself to two sets of them: the third etymology connected with concerted activity and loss of memory, now just behind us; and two of the allegedly humorous explanations of the naming of Brahmins.

When the Buddha gives this third etymology about forgetting, there is, as Gombrich and Collins notice, a difference from the other two. In all three he uses the term *akkhara* (= Sanskrit *akṣara*) to recall what was original and is now forgotten, but this third time he does so to describe actions rather than words. Thus when people "nowadays . . . throw dirt, ash or cow-dung" at a bride, we find a parenthesis in Collins's translation: "They recall the original, primary (actions), but they do not understand what they mean." Gombrich sees this anomaly in the way this third usage etymologizes a no longer understood "custom" rather than a no longer understood sacred "eternal" word (a possible meaning of Sanskrit *akṣara*) (1992*a*, 171). Collins finds Gombrich's idea that the Buddha is "deliberately parodying" a Brahmanical view of the

eternality of language "not . . . decidable" (1993, 336 n. 29); but he thinks Gombrich "must be right" that "*akkhara* used for actions" would come from "'the levelling process typical of oral transmission', and/or as having ousted some other word" (367). I agree with Collins that the point about the eternality of Vedic language is undecidable,[213] but I doubt that this third usage of *akkhara* is secondary.

In each of the three etymologies connected with loss of memory, there is both something said and something done. In the first two the Buddha focusses on the forgotten meaning in what is said, but in each case there is a lamentation, which I signalled by calling it a "collective or concerted activity." In the third case the focus may shift to what is done, but the action whose meaning is forgotten *was* accompanied by words: "Away with you and your impurity,[214] . . . !" The important point is the etymology (or etiology) of the "custom" of marriage. What the Buddha calls "*adhamma*" has turned into marriage, with the same action and words that initially disdained sex now continued *only* as a ritual, and again, with no one remembering what it was originally about. Marriage is the first concerted activity *un*accompanied by lamentation. Clearly, the rite that makes householders is founded on something that was originally shunned, and bifurcates two model communities: one that will see householding as what is "best" since it produces progeny, and one that will restore "what is primary" by ruling sex to be its first grounds for expulsion.

The *AS* continues its account of the evolution of more "bad, unwholesome things"[215] such as "stealing, accusation, lying, punishment and banishment," and tells how Mahāsammata became the first king, which alleviates some "bad things" and compounds others (*AS* [*DN*] 27.21–22; Collins 1993, 345–46). Collins is able to show more references to *Pātimokkha* rules during this span, and Gombrich to Brahmanical ideas, particularly in the Buddha's eight etymologies (*niruktis*) for the four social classes. Regarding Collins's contribution, we must note his decisive discussion of the very naming of Mahāsammata as a

213. Cf. Veidlinger 2006, 73 on "oral" and "written" vagaries of Pāli "*akkhara*."

214. On this repeated *nassa asucī*, see Collins 1993, 366–67 on a possible Brahmanical nuance (following a suggestion of Phyllis Granoff) were it to mean "depart impurity" at a wedding where these things "would be thrown" (no citation is supplied), and a specialized *Vinaya* usage to mean "'expel' from the *saṅgha*." Cf. von Hinüber 1995, 36–37 on the Buddha's use of *nāseti* in expelling the nun Mettiyā for falsely accusing a monk of raping her.

215. The "primary" community's mode of thinking connotes additionally an Abhidhammic sense of "wholesome" and "unwholesome" as applied to *dhammas*. In the *AS*, the beings begin to think repeatedly in the terms "bad, unwholesome things" (*pāpakā akusalā dhammā*) right after the rice required harvesting (Collins 1993, 344–45; cf. 331, 345–46). Such an Abhidhammic outlook is also foreshadowed in the *AS*'s frame, where it mentions what have been called the "Buddhist Ten Commandments" (Hopkins 1923*b*; Huxley 1996*a*, 412) and speaks of murder, theft, sexual misbehavior, lying, malicious speech, harsh speech, frivolous speech, envy, malevolence, and holding wrong views as "those things which are unwholesome, blameworthy, not to be followed," in contrast with "those things which are wholesome" (Collins 1993, 339–41).

Vinaya allusion, with "the Great Appointee" evoking *Vinaya* "monastic organization and self-government" by "consent," and with suggestions of a consensual theory behind kingship (1993, 382–84).

But Collins is framing this discussion around his view that the *AS* is pre-Mauryan. Its theory of kingship is also, I believe, a critique of post-Mauryan Brahmanical notions of (partially) divine kings.[216] It may also offer a compromise to the tensions aired in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* between the Vinaya overtones of *gaṇasaṅgha* polities and the imperial monarchic state (see Collins 1998, 436–45), which would mean it reflected the latter's emergence.

I thus return to the question of dating the *AS*. While my current argument has been that the housing moment is pivotal, my underlying argument has been that this focus must introduce caution in dating the *AS* to pre-Mauryan times. So far this caution hinges mainly on how one periodizes the *dharmasūtras*, whose dates, I recognize, are not set in stone. I have mentioned some other considerations of this type favoring my position, and will now consider two more. On this, I turn to Gombrich and Collins's discussions of the *AS*'s etymologies of the four social classes. While leading up to a description without etymology of Samaṇas "leaving home for homelessness," the Buddha gives eight etymologies for the four *varṇas*, beginning with three for Brahmins, the second and third of which are the ones of interest. The second includes what Gombrich considers to be an allusion to the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, and the third a seeming reference to books.

> The second etymology for Brahmins puns on words linking fire-tending and meditation, and offers this characterization of what Gombrich calls "the original good brahmins": They made leaf-huts in the forest and meditated in them; without coals or smoke (from a cooking fire), pestle set down, they went into villages, towns and royal cities in search of food, in the evening for their evening meal, and in the morning for their morning meal. (*AS* [*DN*] 27.22)[217]

Gombrich finds an "allusion to brahminical literature" here. *Baudhāyana*, he says, "prescribes the way of life of a brahmin ascetic who has renounced the householder's life"; as he translates it:

216. See chapters 3 and 5. The *AS* denies kings any intrinsic authority as divine (e.g., from God's arms), or as made so by Brahmins who consecrate them in a Rājasūya as, among other divinities, Dharma. They are appointed to a function. On "ironical and satirical comment on kings and society" in other suttas (*Mahāsudassana*, *Cakkavatti Sīhanāda*) with which I believe the *AS* is probably contemporary, see Gethin 2005, 85–86, discussing Collins 1998, 476–96.

217. Collins trans. 1993, 346, for the sake of consistency, but dropping a parenthetic "(and mortar)" after "pestle" as a distraction, since the pestle (*musala*) is what counts. Cf. Gombrich 1992*a*, 173. The *AS* has *vītaṅgara vitadhūmā paṇṇamusalā*, which Gombrich plausibly corrects to *sannamusalā*. Collins 1993, 372 takes the emendation as one of several possible variants that in the corresponding *dharma* rule can be read "when the pestle has been set down."

> A wandering renunciate (*parivrājakaḥ*) should leave his family and go forth without possessions according to rule. Going to the forest with his head shaven except for the topknot, wearing a loincloth, staying in one place during the rains, with a yellow-stained outer garment, he should beg food when the pestle has been laid down, there are no live embers, and the collecting of the plates is over (*sannamusale vyaṅgāre nivṛttaśarāvasampāte bhikṣeta*). (*B* 2.11.16–22; Gombrich trans. 1992*a*, 172)

Baudhāyana goes on to speak of nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*), carrying a water strainer, and taking a middle course (*madhyamaṃ padam*) (23–26). As Gombrich notices, the latter "sounds like an allusion to the Buddhists, even if the passage as a whole may be giving a more composite picture" (1992*a*, 173). Both texts thus mention the laid-down pestle and the cooled embers, and *Baudhāyana* adds being finished with "plates." From other examples, we can posit that each is probably nuancing a saying such as Gombrich notices "an extra echo" of in *Manu*:

> A renunciant (*yati*) should always go begging when the pestle has been laid down (*sannamusale*), there is no smoke or live embers, people have finished eating and the plates have been collected. (*M* 6.56, Gombrich trans. 1992*a*, 173)

Manu thus mentions four signs, adding "no smoke." Not noted by Gombrich, *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* 10.7–8 also has a short variant. The *Mahābhārata* also invokes such a saying in its twelfth (12.9.32) and thirteenth Books (13.129.53), which draw frequently on *dharmaśāstra*. We shall return to this adage, its variants, and one of the *Mahābhārata*'s twists on it in chapter 12. What is striking for now is that there is no such saying in the earliest *dharmasūtras* of *Āpastamba* or *Gautama*. This would suggest that the *AS* shares this formulation with, and alludes to, texts that are probably no earlier than the second century BCE.[218] The Buddha is thus evoking a *dharmaśāstra* rule for which there are no early examples. Collins and Gombrich have a looser idea of *Baudhāyana*'s dating than I am working with,[219] and Gombrich invokes oral tradition to keep the *AS* within reach of a pre-Mauryan dating (1992*a*, 173–74). But the argument looks strained. We must not allow oral tradition to be a magic wand.

Like the second etymology for Brahmins, the third also raises questions about orality, but now with a reference to books. Or at least so it seems to me. Here is the third etymology of Brahmins:

218. Collins 1993, 372 cites two additional passages from the Purāṇas.

219. See Collins 1993, 307 on the "later Vedic texts produced by Brahmins, the *dharma-sūtras*"; cf. Gombrich 1988, 55; 1992*a*, 173–74, pulling the *BDhS* passage discussed above into a late Vedic time frame.

> Some of these beings, monks, were unable to maintain (the life of) meditation in forest leaf-huts; they went to the outskirts of villages and towns and lived there making (up) texts (*ganthe karontā*). (Other) humans saw them and said "These beings are unable to maintain (the life of) meditation . . . they live there making (up) texts. They do not meditate." "They do not meditate" (*na . . . jjhāyanti*), monks (is what Students (of the Veda) (*ajjhāyakā*) (means); "*ajjhāyaka*" was the third term (for the brahmin class) to appear. (*AS* [*DN*] 27.23; Collins 1993, 346; cf. 373)

As Collins says, this "pun" on *ajjhāyaka* (= Sanskrit *adhyāyaka*, "reciter") is a "witticism everyone has seen and agrees on" (1993, 374). It is Gombrich's prime example of *AS* humor (1988, 85; 1992*a*, 163), and, as he observes, it takes the previous etymology "to set up the joke" (1992*a*, 173). I do not think, however, that Collins's translation of *ganthe* by "texts" gives the joke its likeliest target. For one thing, his parenthesis around "(up)" in "making (up) texts" seems to make up a new joke that is not really there, suggesting fiction. As Collins notes, Rhys Davids' translation of *ganthe karontā* is simply "make books" (1993, 373). Nothing in the verb suggests that books or texts would have been made "up." Collins calls "books" "an anachronism," and elsewhere he includes *gantha* among a number of Pāli words, including *pāli* itself ("meaning firstly a line, bridge, or causeway, and thence a 'text'"), that carry metaphoric meanings of "text" that are used originally for "oral 'texts.'" Gombrich too (1990, 27) criticizes Schopen's discussion of this passage as "rare" evidence in Pāli for "books," and, like Collins (1998, 227), suggests that Schopen would have done better to speak of a "cult of the text" than a "cult of the book." Gombrich takes *gantha* to mean "knot" here, calling attention to the phrase *manthe ganthetvā* in the *Sutta Nipāta*, *Brāhmaṇadhammika Sutta* 19, where it means "'knot together' mantras—and the reference is to their composing Vedic texts" (1990, 27).[220] But this verbal usage is easier to take as "knot together" than the nominal one of *gantha* with "make" is, which is easier to take as "book."[221]

Now it is widely acknowledged that writing in classical India cannot be shown to be much if any earlier than the Aśokan edicts. It would not in any case

220. Cf. Collins 1993, 337 n. 36. As Collins summarizes the *Brāhmaṇadhammika Sutta*, the original Brahmans "began to covet, *inter alia*, the wealth and 'excellent women' of kings, and so began composing hymns to acquire them" (1993, 320).

221. Unfortunately, Schopen confines discussion to a footnote, citing this usage only as the first example of "rare" references "to books" in "canonical Pāli" (1975, 171 n. 46) and not revisiting the matter in the article's republication (2005, 59 n. 46).

serve anyone's argument to say that a text mentioning "books" is pre-Mauryan. So a lot is at stake in maintaining that the *AS* is speaking only of "knots." Indeed, considerable scholarly energy has gone into keeping the *Sutta Piṭaka* oral. Ever since Rhys Davids and Oldenberg, however, it has been recognized that the *Vinaya Piṭaka* contains numerous references to writing.[222] *Vinaya* orality has thus been treated more selectively,[223] most notably with reference to the *Pātimokkha*. It is of course a leap to suggest that familiarity with writing in the *Vinaya* may be pertinent to an uncertain reference to "books" in the *AS*. Laced as it is with *Vinaya* allusions, the *AS* could still reflect a stage of *Vinaya* development older than the *Vinaya*'s references to writing. Nonetheless, everyone agrees that the *AS* is describing the Vedas here, whether as books, texts, or knots. It is probably a better joke if it is saying that the "Reciters" who "do not meditate" had started making these worshipful texts into books.

This matter of humor in the *AS* has drawn some fire. Leaving aside whether the Buddha himself had the wit that the *AS* attributes to him, the *AS* is certainly humorous, as can be said of some other *suttas*. The humor is important. But why? Gethin has been critical of rationalist assumptions behind Gombrich's attributions of humor where he finds the narrative implausible (1997, 216; 2006 65–66), while Andrew Huxley remarks on the uncertainties of attributing humor to a fifth-century BCE text. Yet both are also congenial to the topic within limits. Crediting Collins's eye for humor and noting that its role in the *AS* was opened up over a century ago by Rhys Davids,[224] Gethin remarks that humor is one of the ways that a Buddhist *sutta* "has the power to move and arouse—certainly in its ancient listeners—religious emotions in the manner so well brought out by Steven Collins in his discussion of the *Vessantara Jātaka*."[225] We are not far here from acknowledging the place of humor in a palate of emotions or moods (*rasas*) such as is theorized in classical Indian aesthetics, and indeed mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (1.4.8), which has so many affinities with the *Vessantara Jātaka*, as Gombrich appreciated (1985). Meanwhile, according to Huxley, "What we really need is an analysis of the N. E. Indian sense of humour in the 5th century BC graded on a scale from buffoonery to subtle irony, with appendices showing regional variations among Sakyans, Magadhans, male adult celibates and enlightened beings. . . ." (1996*a*, 412).

222. See Rhys Davids and Oldenberg [1881] 1968, xxxii–xxxvi on the "indisputable" evidence for "the existence of the art of writing at the time when the *Vinaya* texts were put into their present shape," "and the use of written books"—but not for the sacred texts; and with no one owning books, manuscripts, inks, pens, etc. There are also rules on oral recital and making a quorum for it. For discussion, see Gombrich 1990, 27–28.

223. See however Gombrich 1990, 21, 25.

224. See Rhys Davids 1899, 105–7; Gethin 2006, 65, 85–86, 102–3.

225. Gethin 2006, 102–3, citing Collins 1998, 497–554 on this *jātaka*. The *sutta* in question for Gethin is the *Mahāsudassana*, in which he finds humor in the poignant portrayal of the king's wives (2006, 101–2).

I have tried to improve the contextualization by moving three centuries forward to an intertextual situation that brings out more clearly what is especially notable about the *AS*: that it is funny about the Law—by which I mean not only *Vinaya* but *Dharmaśāstra*, and about both in tandem and in juxtaposition.

On such a note, I close with a quote from Huxley, who, along with his congenial reservations on *AS* humor, tells a good joke about it:

> I picture the Buddha expounding #18 to #20 [the sections on transformations in society] absolutely deadpan. Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja are walking a step behind him nodding their heads and trying to remember it all. "Wow!" mutters Bhāradvāja, *sotto voce*, "the Śākyamuni's really getting stuck into the human sciences tonight!" And then the Buddha, equally deadpan, moves on to #21 to #25 [on the origins of kingship and etymologies on caste] and knocks them dead. As the howls of laughter die down and as the audience pick themselves off the ground, Vāseṭṭha asks "By the way, Blessed One, were you serious about that Mahāsammata stuff?" To which the Buddha replies. . . . (1996*a*, 412).

For my money, however, the Śākyamuni got stuck into the human sciences from his first words in the frame, and got his first howls just before Huxley's segment when, after saying, "How could a being do such a thing to another being?" he followed this with "houses to conceal it."

5

Post-Vedic Brahmanical *Dharma*

Passages from the Vedas have necessarily been sifted by all attempts to trace the history of *dharma*. One solid result has been the recognition, clearest from the studies of Olivelle, that while one can trace early and interim usages of *dharma* up to the Middle Vedic period, the concept does not come to full flower until it is developed in early Buddhism, as discussed in earlier chapters, and in the Brahmanical texts that will be introduced in this chapter: the *dharmasūtras, The Laws of Manu*, and the two Sanskrit epics: the *Mahābhārata* with the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. We may speak of these texts somewhat loosely as post-Vedic in that they are composed at a point where the Veda is undergoing not only canonical closure but reclamation in new domains and genres, including those represented by these very texts. While we shall take further note of some other late Vedic[1] and early classical Brahmanical usages, particularly in Sanskrit grammar, Mīmāṃsā ritual theory, *Arthaśāstra* political theory, and also in dramaturgy, aesthetics, erotics, and even (as we shall see in chapter 7) astronomy that tie in with these developments by making *dharma* relevant to their main concerns, these are the main early texts to make *dharma* itself their main concern. That will be the justification for making it the charge of this chapter to take up the question of the relation between these texts in their treatment of *dharma*, for these are the texts that open up the concept for what is

1. For example, the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, which is probably post-Buddhist, treated in chapter 3.

to become known as Hinduism. In doing so, we will keep *The Laws of Manu* [henceforth *Manu*] more or less at the center of this chapter, since with "Manu,"[2] we get down to the thicket of it, from which we may hope to emerge onto the more familiar (at least for this author) terrain of the epics.

In organizing matters in this fashion, we stay with the rough chronology that Olivelle has continued to sharpen,[3] though I must soon question certain points.

A. Vedic Schools and the *Dharmasūtras*

To probe the provenance of the *dharmasūtras* and *Manu*'s relation to them, we must locate them not only in history but as a genre. At least in the cases of *Āpastamba* and *Baudhāyana*, two of the three oldest *dharmasūtras*, they come—as *dharmasūtras*—third in train, serially and also historically, within a larger genre called the *kalpasūtras*, where they follow two earlier types of *sūtra* texts: the *śrautasūtras*—"aphoristic commentaries on the texts of the solemn [*śrauta*] ritual of the Brāhmaṇas," and the *gṛhyasūtras*—"aphorisms concerning the domestic [*gṛhya*] ritual borrowed from the solemn ritual and also the *Atharvaveda*."[4] The *dharmasūtras* of *Āpastamba* and *Baudhāyana* are additions to *kalpasūtras* of Vedic schools associated with their names, while the other two, *Gautama* and *Vasiṣṭha*, are named after ancient Vedic sages and have more tenuous associations with particular schools (see Olivelle 2005*b*, 272). *Kalpa* derives from the root √*kḷp*, "to form, give form to," which also gives us the associated term *saṃkalpa*, the announcement of a sacrificial desire for a ritual result or "fruit." As Biardeau puts it,

> On the ritual register, *kalpa* refers to that which is made and which takes form and gives a result. It implies a certain order of execution, a method, under the form of "injunctions"—*vidhi*—which constitute precisely the constraining part of the ritual and complete what is set forth in the Vedic Brāhmaṇa texts. To look at them more closely, the *kalpasūtras* are collections of positive and negative injunctions, injunctions that are directly ritual or in rapport with conduct. They always imply that something must produce itself given such and such a ritual action." (Biardeau 2002, 1: 66–67; my translation)

2. As with other texts named after their reputed authors, I will refer to the text in italics and to the reputed author without italics, and sometimes in quotation marks, as I do here. Cf. Olivelle 2004*b*, xxii.

3. For a positive assessments, see Lubin 2005, 80 n. 9 (also on Witzel's chronology for the earlier Vedic period), 82–83 n. 12, 92 n. 35; Jamison 2006, 191.

4. Biardeau 2002, 1: 66. Biardeau's analysis is, of course, rather textual. As we shall see, others emphasize that the *gṛhya*- and *dharma-sūtras* are based on custom. See Jamison 2000 for a study in continuities in such texts from ritual to legal injunction.

That the groundsetting Brahmanical texts on *dharma* should frame their discourse under a larger heading of ritual injunction is obviously momentous, since it makes an implied correlation between *dharma* and ritual action or *karma* that has until now been largely absent.[5]

The initial phase of *kalpasūtra* production makes these ritual and, more precisely, injunctive overtones perfectly clear in usages of *dharma*. As Olivelle has demonstrated, even while the *śrautasūtras* use the term only minimally, they sharpen it precisely in this direction: "It appears that the expert scholastic tradition on ritual developed a very special meaning of *dharma* that . . . refers to the specific ritual rules or ritual details of a rite." It could thereby be explained how certain model rituals or "archetypes" (*prakṛtis*) provide "*dharmas*, taken as ritual details," that can be extended from the archetypes to other rites (*vikṛtis*) that follow their model on these specific ritual details (2004*a*, 501). As Olivelle observes, this "specialized and technical meaning," absent from the canonical Vedic texts (including the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads), "probably developed within the expert tradition devoted to ritual that produced both the *Śrautasūtras* and the later Mīmāṃsā texts." Moreover, as he says, "interestingly," this meaning comes hand in hand with a distinctive *śrautasūtra* deployment of the compound *svadharma*, "used with a similar meaning" when it refers to instances where "a particular rite has its own ritual details (*dharmas*) specific to it and not taken over from or extended to other rites" (502). The ground is thus set for *svadharma* as "own ritual details" to be applied in later Brahmanical texts to the personal "duties particular to" groups and individuals.[6] Although the *śrautasūtra* usage of *svadharma* is probably pre-Buddhist, and we should not in any case expect either tradition to be reading the other on such fine points, its technical sense as "own ritual detail" has something of the impersonal quality of the Buddhist *dharma* theory, but with an entirely opposite focus on particular unextendable characteristics rather than causal interdependence.

There would seem to be reasons to stress both continuity and discontinuity from the *gṛhyasūtras* to the *dharmasūtras*. On the one hand, Olivelle thinks it very likely that the same author would have composed both the *Āpastamba-gṛhya-* and *-dharma-sūtras*, which would mean some continuity in what for Olivelle is the earliest *dharmasūtra* (2003, 4 n. 5; 2005*b*, 161, 164 n. 25). On the other hand, he hypothesizes that the *dharmasūtras* "constitute a special category," "an autonomous genre," in breaking new ground as the first to the use the term *śāstra* self-referentially (2005*b*, 156), and also, as will be noted, as

5. Except where it has been backread onto older texts by translators and interpreters; see chapter 3 § A.

6. Among the few *gṛhyasūtra* usages of *dharma* that Olivelle notes (2004*a*, 502–3), that of *dhārmika* for the Vedic student (*Baudhāyana Gṛhyasūtra* 3.3.31) could be said to point in this direction. In chapter 9, I will suggest that "law-abiding" is a useful translation of this usage in the epics.

the first to expound upon its own sources of authority. Olivelle's point is not that some of the Vedic schools "did not produce literature on *dharma*," which "they evidently did," but "that the expert tradition on *dharma* probably did not arise as an integral part of the ritual tradition of scholarship" (2005*b*, 156 n. 6). I believe this is correct. The distinctive ways in which the *śrautasūtras* use the term *dharma* and *svadharma* offer significant precedents for the *dharmasūtras*, but are not immediate to their chosen tasks.

Moreover, just as texts can disguise the "lived reality of their authors" to sustain "fictions" of Vedic "timelessness" and eternal continuity (Olivelle 2005*b*, 160, 170), so can the ways in which they seem discontinuous conceal underlying continuities. It may well be by design that whereas the *gṛhyasūtras* follow the *śrautasūtras* in tying the *kalpasūtras* to specific Vedic schools (*śākhās*) which can be located to specific regions, such ties become less evident in the *dharmasūtras*. As Timothy Lubin puts it, while calling attention to a "contrast" with the highly developed institutional structures of early Buddhism, "Brāhmanical institutions were diffuse and intensely localized, at least prior to the early *dharma*-texts. . . . The diffusion of textual knowledge was dependent upon teacher-to-pupil lineages and texts themselves were treated as belonging to individual descent groups until Mauryan times at least. Thereafter, a pan-Ārya scholastic and literary tradition began to take shape (although the core texts continued to be treated as proprietary knowledge of individual lineages)" (2005, 81–82). That is, while the *dharmasūtras* retain more or less formal ties with Vedic *śākhās*, their new concern lies in creating a pan-Ārya and thus supra-regional identity around the concept of *dharma* in a way that makes it very hard if not impossible to spot their regional provenance.[7] Like some others (e.g., Doniger 1991, xxxv–xxxvi; Olivelle 2005*b*, 165), Lubin calls this a "universal" *dharma* (92), with *Manu* completing such a "universalization" (87), and says this "new Brahmanism, called '*dharma*' (perhaps in imitation of Buddhist usage of the term), also aimed at establishing an ecumenical set of standards that could serve to coordinate the separate traditions of the individual Vedic schools" (92). As Biardeau puts it, "For the first time, one witnesses an attempt to put in systematic order the brahmanical society and its functioning" (2002, 1: 68). But clearly it would be more correct to call this *Ārya dharma* a "civilizational" *dharma*—and a highly flexible and diversified one at that—than a "universal" one. Let me suggest for now that it is the universal claims of the Buddhist *dharma* that this supple civilizational *dharma* will find repeated reasons and ways to challenge.

7. See Olivelle 1999, xxvii on the question of whether Āpastamba came from the south, introduced by the comment that "the geographical provenance of these documents is not very clear."

Lubin shows that still more historical information can be culled from the relation between these three strata of *kalpasūtra*. Why, he asks, after codifying the "high cult" of "complex multi-fire rites" in the *śrautasūtras*, "might the priestly authors have considered it necessary, in a second stage, to codify the ceremonies outside the *śrauta* system as well?" He proposes a sixth- to fourth-century BCE setting when the Brahmanical system was still poorly adapted to "the dramatic growth of trading towns and cities" then underway (at least in eastern regions), and still "dependent upon the stable caste society of the village" (although its textual formulation may have been more stable than its implementations). Lubin discusses a cluster of "regimens of discipline" (*vratas*), including Veda study for all three Ārya classes, Veda recitation (*svādhyāya*), and studentship (*brahmacarya*) to be among the "apparent novelties" that are sacramentalized in the *gṛhyasūtras*; but he regards the "five great sacrifices" (*mahāyajñas*) as foremost among the "hints" or "signs that the genre came to embody the *Zeitgeist* of this period" (2005, 83–84).

These five *mahāyajñas* are frequently cited as having Vedic and *śrauta* precedent "in a Brāhmaṇa,"[8] but they are especially "rubricated" in the *gṛhyasūtras* (Lubin 2005, 86 n. 19), where they are "inserted into the ritual cycle" to be performed daily as "the most prominent instance of a simplified ritual format" (88). They include (*a*) a food offering (*bali*) on the ground or in the air to Beings (e.g., crows); (*b*) food hospitality to guests; (*c*) at least some wood as a fire-offering to the gods while saying "Svāhā"; (*d*) a water offering to ancestors while saying "Svadhā"; and (*e*) private Vedic recitation (*svādhyāya*) as the offering to Brahman.[9] Positing "that all the rewards of a pious *śrautin* life could be secured through the regular performance of a few simple 'super-sacrifices' (*mahāyajñas*)," the *gṛhyasūtras* mark a "doctrinal shift" (84); this "radical simplification of Vedic duties," which includes Vedic recitation itself as one of the five and the performance of all five as a "marker of Ārya status," would then be further generalized as exemplifying Brahmanical *dharma* in the *dharmasūtras*.[10]

Overlapping with this daily domestic routine, a man also has three lifelong personal debts that more or less correspond to three of the five *mahāyajñas*. These are to seers (study), gods (sacrifice), and ancestors (offspring). According to *Manu*, a man must fulfill these before he can leave his inheritance to his sons and retire in equanimity (*M* 4.257). The three are mentioned at *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 6.3.5–10 and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.7.2.1–6, with the latter adding "the debt of hospitality to

8. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.5.6.1–10 begins its description of them as "great sacrificial sessions" (*mahāsattrāṇi*), implying that they would be equivalent to Soma sacrifices that last several days; see Biardeau 1976, 40–41; Tsuchida 1991, 68. Lubin 2005, 86 n. 19 also cites *Taittiriya Āraṇyaka* 2.10.14.

9. On *svādhyāya*, see chapter 3 § E.

10. *Ā* 1.12.13–1.13.1, with *dānam* as "giving food" to signify the offering of hospitality to men [Tsuchida 1991, 68]; *G* 5.3, 8; *B* 2.11.1–8, emphasizing *svādhyāya* [6–8]; 3.1.19; *V* 27.7, as quickly destroying sins, "even grievous sins."

men, bringing the theology of debts into closer alignment with the five great sacrifices" (Olivelle 2005*a*, 277–78).[11] Olivelle considers *Manu* to have been the first to use "this theology of debt to defend his position that the orders of life (*āśramas*) are to be followed sequentially as an individual grows old and that renunciation is limited to old age," though, as he observes, the theology of debt is also "alluded to in the '*Mahābhārata*' " (2008, xxi). Olivelle's position is that *Manu* would be earlier than the *Mahābhārata*, or at least than this usage in the *Mahābhārata*. But, more important on this specific point, he says that *Manu* would have been the first to use "the theology of debts (*ṛṇa*) to provide theological grounding to his view," which was in opposition to that of *Baudhāyana*, who used the theology of debt "as an argument against the *āśrama* system as a whole and against celibate asceticism" (2008, liii n. 1, citing Olivelle 1993, 86–91). On this matter, *Manu* states:

> Only after he has paid his three debts, should a man set his mind on release (*mokṣa*); if he devotes himself to release without paying them, he will proceed downward. Only after he has studied the Vedas according to rule, fathered sons in keeping with the Law, and offered sacrifices according to his ability, should a man set his mind on release. (*Manu* 6.35–36; Olivelle 2005*a*, 600; 2008, xxi)

We will return to debates about the *āśrama* system later in this chapter, and to Olivelle's discussion of *Manu*'s views on the relation of debt to *mokṣa* in our final chapter.

Now if the dates estimated both for this transition and for the society described in the Pāli *suttas* (see chapter 4) are within reason, the *dharmasūtras* would be beginning their prescriptions for Brahmanical and Ārya culture in conditions chronologically (if not necessarily geographically) more or less at the near side of the cusp that these Buddhist texts describe. There is a major difference that will have to be explained: while the *dharmasūtras* continue to exalt the village and discourage Brahmins from even going to crowded and noisy places,[12] the Pāli *suttas*, supposedly reflecting slightly earlier conditions of around 300 BCE, already present *mahāsāla* Brahmins—with the emphasis on their being wealthy landholders, not householders (see chapter 4 § A)—comfortably ensconced in market towns and capital cities. But otherwise, the Buddhist descriptions highlight many identical and overlapping Brahmanical "regimens" (studentship with

11. Cf. Olivelle 1993, 46–53; Malamoud 1996, 92–108 (104–5 on the debt to ancestors); and Biardeau 1976, 36, 40–41. The *Mahābhārata* tells several stories of ancestors appearing to demand that a man have a son, beginning with the tale of Jaratkāru (1.13, 34–36, 41–44, 48–49, 53).

12. See *Ā* 1.32.18–19, 21 on avoiding fairs, casinos, and cities; Lubin 2005, 79–80 n. 5 on usages of *nagara*, city.

celibacy as *brahmacariya*, Vedic study as *ajjhena*,[13] triple Vedic knowledge as *tevijja*, hospitality practices evident in the narratives) and personal types (the Vedic scholar or *sottiya*, the "bath-graduate" or *n[a]hātaka*).[14] And they also offer particularly intriguing treatments of the five *mahāyajñas* (Pāli *mahāyaññas*) as practiced by both householder and ascetic Brahmins.[15] Indeed, the Buddhist texts would seem to delineate the five *little* great sacrifices (*mahāyaññas*) described so far, which the Buddha basically endorses as piety practices wholesome for lay Brahmin converts, in juxtaposition with five *big* great sacrifices (*mahāyaññas*)—*śrauta* rites with animal victims that the *little* great sacrifices would supposedly have reformed—which he condemns.[16] Moreover, the Pāli *suttas* also seem to introduce, as a further and still more acceptable modification of both types of *mahāyaññas*, a grouping of "five Brāhmaṇadhammā" or "five things that the brahmins prescribe for the performance of merit, for accomplishing the wholesome":[17] truthfulness (*sacca*), austerities (*tapa*), purity in sexual life (*brahmacariya*), erudition (*ajjhena*), and charity (*cāga*, Sanskrit *tyāga*)—each "as old as Vedic culture, itself" (Tsuchida 1991, 72). In the *Subha Sutta* (*MN* 99.18–27), the Buddha favors this set emphatically by supplementing the five with the addition of a recommended sixth, "the motive of compassion" (*anukampājātika*), then goes on to interpret them in relation to the four "unlimited" Brahmavihāra practices of friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity that form "the path to the company of Brahmā," and finally declares that what they really are is "equipment of the mind"—which thrills the great landholder Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi when he hears of it (see chapter 4 § A).

The Buddhist texts would no doubt have their own reasons for pushing such distinctions between different types and modifications of *mahāyaññas*, and

13. Or *ajjhayana*, in each case equivalent to Sanskrit *adhyayana*, studying the Veda.

14. See Tsuchida 1991 on these Pāli terms and their Sanskrit counterparts.

15. What follows is drawn mainly from the rich treatment of these three sets by Tsuchida (1991, 68–90), but the juxtapositions and usages of "little" and "big" are my own. Cf. Inden 2006, 92: "I am tempted to see these five Great Sacrifices as dialectically formulated in response to the Great Gifts of the five precepts of Buddhism."

16. See Tsuchida 1991, 88–89: the five include three known *śrauta* rites, the Aśvamedha, Puruṣamedha or human sacrifice, and Vājapeya, and two that are obscure (see Falk 1988). See Bodhi 2000, 171–72, 402 n. 214 on *Kosalasaṃyutta* 9, where inclusion of animal sacrifice is said to have been instituted by King Okkāka; and *Kūṭadanta-Sutta* (*DN* 5), where the Buddha condemns *mahāyañña* with animal sacrifice and tells how in a former life as a royal chaplain he advised a king to do a beneficial sixteenfold bloodless "great sacrifice" instead (*DN* 5.9–21; Tsuchida 75–76). Tsuchida 80–83 notes the "semantic twist" (82) put on the usage in *MN* 92.7–8 (*Sela Sutta*), where preparations for a visit by the Buddha to the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya are compared to a *mahāyañña*. Should it be one like that planned by the stereotyped landlord Brahmin Kuṭadanta, it would include "seven hundred bulls, seven hundred bullocks, seven hundred heifers, seven hundred he-goats and seven hundred rams" (*DN* 5.1)—as Tsuchida 89 says, "unlikely details" and probably satirical. Cf. Bailey and Mabbett 2003, 249–52, suggesting that the Buddhist texts make an analogy between *śrauta* rites and "the 'total' event of the Buddha visiting a village."

17. *MN* 99.8, *Subha Sutta*; Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2005, 810 translation.

between wealthy landholding Brahmins who could be encouraged to do Buddhist modifications of the little *mahāyaññas*, and lean longhaired ascetic Brahmins called *jaṭilas* who did bigger *mahāyaññas* as fire-offering rites in *assamas* (Sanskrit *āśramas*) or hermitages, and who could make impressive converts.[18] The *dharmasūtras* may be said to unify these matters by leaving *big mahāyajñas* to the *śrautasūtras* that precede them and marking more of a continuum between Brahmin occupations and lifestyles—notably where *Āpastamba* defines "the occupations specific to a Brahmin (*svakarma brāhmaṇasya*)" as "studying, teaching, sacrificing, officiating at sacrifices, giving gifts, receiving gifts, inheriting, and gleaning, as well as appropriating things that do not belong to anybody" (4–5)! Āpastamba thereby begins with what become the standard six "occupations" or "duties" of Brahmins (see *Manu* 10.74–75; *Mbh* 3.189.12c; 13.129.7–8), while with the last three, idiosyncratic in *Āpastamba*, before just pushing the envelope at the end, he comes up with the contrastive pair of "inheriting and gleaning." This odd couple, as Biardeau observes, suggests that Āpastamba is putting together two contradictory lifestyles—the wealthy landed householder and the ascetic—that Brahmins are newly settling into: "Inheritance presupposes that the Brahmin has goods to transmit to his descendants, while gleaning, on the contrary, is witness to the extreme poverty of the Brahmin who lives day to day, of whom some make an ideal as he remains entirely a householder" (Biardeau 2002, 1: 77). Of course the pair could correspond fairly well to the *mahāsāla* and *jaṭila* Brahmins juxtaposed in the Pāli suttas. We shall look into this gleaning ideal in later chapters.

It is noteworthy that we have here only reasons to affirm that the Buddhist *suttas* describe a slightly earlier state of Brahmanical society than the *dharmasūtras*, and we may suspect two reasons why the latter do not yet bring Brahmins to the market towns and cities: that they continue the conservative outlook of the *gṛhyasūtras*, and that the cities were becoming crowded with *nāstikas*, including Buddhists who might try to convert them. The epics and *Manu* will find ways to bridge this rural/urban divide. But while the epics have relatively little to say directly about *mahāyajñas* as a group or a formal term,[19]

18. Tsuchida 1991, 78, 80, 83–88. The canonical Pāli texts call them *jaṭilas* with reference to their wearing matted hair (*jaṭā*). The Kassapa brothers, for instance, became prominent converts and disciples.

19. Tsuchida 1991, 88 notes that the *Mahābhārata* calls the Aśvamedha a *mahāyajña* (12.260.37), but this does not seem to be a technical usage, as the epics refer frequently to the Aśvamedha as a "great sacrifice," as also other *śrauta* rites (e.g., *Mbh* 1.13.93, Serpent-*sattra*; 2.11.6 and 3.241.23, Rājasūya). While the *Mbh* alludes to the (little) five frequently, its only *explicit* references to them that I can find are at 13.129.46, where Śiva ascribes them to forest-dwelling sages, and 14.15.16 (*Anugītā*). Nārada probably suggests the small daily routines when he urges the Pāṇḍavas to offer "great sacrifices" when they have lost the dice match and are about to enter the forest (2.71.44), whereas Draupadī soon reminds Yudhiṣṭhira that although he now lives in the forest dethroned, "You have offered up the great sacrifices of the Horse Sacrifice, Rājasūya, Puṇḍarīka, and Gosava with ample stipends for priests" (3.31.16).

they widen them immensely in narrative contexts, where hospitality can be exchanged also with edifying animals.[20] But it is especially *Manu* who unpacks the five *mahāyajñas*, and quite possibly makes them relevant in some ways to urban and commercial living. At 3.67–89 (etc.), he makes clear for the first time that one is to use the domestic fire rather than the three *śrauta* fires for them, and suggests considerations of nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*) by introducing the five by the "inevitable violence" of "the householder's five slaughter-houses (*pañcasūnā gṛhasthasya*)": the fireplace, grindstone, broom, mortar and pestle, and water pot, which the great Ṛṣis designed the "great sacrifices" to expiate.[21] At 4.21–24, he goes on to say that the five can be performed by interior meditative means: by the sense organs, speech, breath, or knowledge.[22] Yet at 6.5–9, he still enjoins that they be continued by the forest hermit. As Tsuchida (1991, 68) observes, with *Manu*, "extolling of the mahāyajña-s has reached the utmost magnitude," on which he quotes *Manu* 3.75: "He should apply himself here daily to his vedic recitation (*svādhyāya*) and to making offerings to gods; for by applying himself to making offerings to gods, he upholds (*bibharti*) this world, both the mobile and the immobile."

B. Toward Consensus in Brahmanical *Dharma* Texts

Taking Olivelle's cue that *dharma* was never a prominent term in early pre-Buddhist Vedic usages, we have followed his hypothesis on the innovative royal character of the Buddhist usage of *dharma* to the point where it is ready to become more complicated, for Olivelle hypothesizes that it is only once Aśoka broadcasts the term in his edicts that Brahmanical culture develops texts in which to articulate *dharma* as the all-embracing norm of post-Aśokan Brahmanical culture. As of 1999, of the four earliest *dharmasūtras*, Olivelle placed *Āpastamba* first, in the early third-century BCE, and thus roughly contemporary with or even prior to Aśoka's edicts; *Gautama* second, in the mid-third-century BCE; *Baudhāyana* third in the mid-second-century BCE; and *Vasiṣṭha* last, bringing us down to the first- or second-century CE (1999,

20. At the sage Upamanyu's *āśrama*, for instance, "Mongooses sported with snakes, and tigers with the deer, like friends" (*Mbh* 13.14.42ab). It is always an implicit question in animal fables, and sometimes an explicit one, whether one can learn *dharma* from animals. The monkey Hanumān says that those who come from animal wombs, like him, "do not know *dharma*," as do men who are "endowed with intellect (*buddhi*)" (3.146.75); but then he goes on to speak about it: first as regards its violation by the Pāṇḍavas' overhunting (77), and then at length about the *dharma* of the yugas (148.9–36).

21. He also mentions teaching rather than *svādhyāya* as the offering to the Veda, before also mentioning *svādhyāya*. On these points see the excellent discussion by Biardeau 1976, 41–43.

22. Cf. *Mbh* 12.12.23: Nakula, recommending the householder life to the reluctant Yudhiṣṭhira after the war, reminds him that some do the "great sacrifices just with their minds" (*mahāyajnān manasāiva vitanvate*).

xxviii–xxxiv). In his 2005*a* critical edition of *Manu*, holding to the same sequence, he finds these dates "still . . . reasonable," but is "inclined now to place them somewhat later" (2005*a*, 20–21 n. 32). Olivelle has thus been revising downward both from others' earlier datings and his own.[23] Most recently, he writes, "The very creation of a Brahmanical genre of literature dedicated to *dharma* was possibly due to the elevation of this word to the level of imperial ideology by Aśoka" (2005*a*, 39; cf. 2005*b*; cf. 2004*a*, 506). We have already found Olivelle's chronological hypotheses useful in relation to pre- and post-Mauryan Vinaya datings in chapter 4.[24]

As Olivelle says, the *dharmasūtras* are "Dharmaśāstric texts written in the sūtra mode" (2005*b*, 165). Other than *Āpastamba*, the others use the term *dharmaśāstra* when referring to themselves (*G* 11.19; *B* 1.1.13; *V* 24.6; 27.19); and the grammatical commentary of Patañjali, which can be fairly reliably dated at about 150 BCE, also uses the term *dharmaśāstra* with reference at least to *dharmasūtra* rules and probably to extant *dharmasūtra* texts (Olivelle 2005*b*, 161–63). Olivelle distinguishes within the overlap: "In the early literature, . . . the titles Dharmaśāstra and Dharmasūtra were synonyms, the former referring to their substance and the latter to their linguistic form" (163). That is, whereas the term *śāstra* denotes "instruction" about a topic that can take the form of a "treatise," *sūtra*, meaning "thread," is used for threaded aphorisms that call for elucidating commentary. The *dharmasūtras* are thus included in the explicit *dharma* tradition of "treatises on *dharma*" (*dharmaśāstra*) along with *Manu*. *Manu* is titled both as *Manu Smṛti* and *Mānava-dharmaśāstra*, and with the latter usage it offers itself as the first text in this *dharma* tradition (those named after Yājñavalkya and Nārada will follow) to be called a *śāstra* rather than a *sūtra*, having abandoned the aphoristic *sūtra* form.

I date *Manu* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* a little later than or possibly even overlapping with the completion of the *Mahābhārata*, which I have urged would have been composed under the inspired leadership of a main author, whom the epic itself calls Vyāsa, at the head of some kind of committee or atelier, about which I have hypothesized two main things: that the interpersonal dynamics of this group would likely have borne some implied resemblance to the figures and processes depicted in the epic's frame stories; and that this team would have

23. Olivelle provides good grounds for revising downward (by roughly a century) from dates he had proposed in Olivelle 1993, 71, 94, 101–3, and for considering *Ā* prior to *G*. Cf. Olivelle 1999, xxxi–xxxii on older and widely cited datings proposed principally by Kane 1962–75, 1: 19–90, 94–112; 3: xvii, who dates *G* before *Ā*; and Biardeau 2002, 1: 68, who considers Kane's "science sans faille" in placing *G* first. Biardeau adds, "If the 6th–4th centuries can represent a plausible point of departure, . . . the blossoming of the sūtra literature corresponds, come what may, to the birth of Buddhism" (2002, 1: 68).

24. See chapter 4 § C, especially § C.3.

accomplished its masterpiece over a period of no more than two generations at some point between 150 BCE to the turn of the millennium.[25] *Manu* is perhaps, at the earliest, an early Śuṅga text, according to Witzel (2006, 482), or as late as the Kushanas according to Olivelle (2005*a*, 24–25),[26] who dates the *Mahābhārata* after it (2004*b*, xxiii; 2005, 23–25). Biardeau dates the *Mahābhārata* and *Manu* as "no doubt nearly contemporary" around 200 BCE, and the *Rāmāyaṇa* around 100 BCE (1999, xxxiv–xxxiv, li–lii). We shall come back to these probably intractable issues. For the moment, it will suffice to say that *Manu* gives central attention to the *dharma* of kings—Brahmanical kings, Hindu kings-to-be—in ways that go far beyond anything in the *dharmasūtras*. The obvious point for now is that *Manu* is joined by both epics in making the king's *dharma* central.

Having considered Olivelle's hypothesis so far mainly in terms of kingship, we must now begin to address points at which it becomes more complex, even as he has continued to work on it. In the article "Power of Words" (2005*b*, 121–35), Olivelle reviews his understanding of what would have happened by the middle of the third-century BCE to have prompted the creation of the *dharmasūtras*, and outlines four factors:

1. The mainly royal term *dharma* was appropriated by ascetic groups, including especially Buddhists, and in particular by the charismatic leaders of such groups, who used the term to define their "law," "teaching," or "view."
2. They ethicized the term.
3. It became a public term under Aśoka.
4. The *kalpasūtra* literature "facilitated" a Brahmanical "reappropriation" of the term by providing "a literary structure already in place" that had articulated "the ritual strand of the semantics of *dharma* already found in the Vedas and the *Śrauta-sūtras*" (Olivelle 2005*b*, 132–33).

In a further twist, Olivelle also mentions the topic of the "sources of *dharma*" as "one aspect of the emergent brahmanical discourse on *dharma* that may have some relationship to" Buddhist and other "ascetic appropriations of

25. Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 18–20; 2004*a*, 215–19; 2005*c*, 89. For overview and updated discussion, see Adluri 2011. For further refinement as to this span's historical parameters and discussion of its background events, see Hiltebeitel 2011*a*, chapter 4: "Why *Itihāsa*: New Possibilities and Limits in Considering the *Mahābhārata* as History." Cf. Bodhi 2000, 30 proposing that the arranging of the Buddhist *suttas* would have been the work of one or more appointed committees.

26. Olivelle 2005*a*, 24–25. Cf. 2004*b*, xxiii; cf. 2005*a*, 20–25, with mention (21 [cf. 43] of the view of Jayaswal 1930, 29) that *Manu* would be "a work of the Śuṅga period during a time of Brahmanical revival after the Aśokan period," and thus written probably early "during the last 170 years before the common era." Bronkhorst in press considers only Olivelle's later dating of *Manu*.

the term" (2005*b*, 133; cf. 2004*a*, 506)—a point he then advances in his "Explorations in the Early History of Dharmaśāstra" (2005*b*, 155–77; 2006*b*). Here, Olivelle considers it additionally "probable" that the *dharmasūtra* authors (*dharmasūtrakāras*) would have been the first in the *sūtra* tradition to explicitly address the issue of the "authority" (*pramāṇa*) of their own "sources" (*mūla*) because they were "consciously responding" to "the Buddhist theory of *dharmapramāṇa*," which makes the word of the Buddha, *buddhavacana*, the authoritative source of *dharma*. In contrast to such a reliance on a single charismatic authority,[27] the Brahmanical texts diversify the sources of *dharma*, and each includes among them some kind of consensus. *Āpastamba* speaks first of "accepted customary Laws" (*sāmayācārikān dharmān*)[28] and mentions two kinds of authority (*pramāṇam*) on these: "acceptance by those who know *dharma*" and the Vedas; *Gautama* (1.1–2) reverses these priorities, placing Veda first, and also mentions *smṛti*—tradition, "textualized memory"[29]—as a third source (*mūla*) between Veda and "practice" (*śīla*) (1.1–2); *Baudhāyana* keeps the same order as *Gautama* but offers greater detail, mentioning "each Veda," "what is given in the tradition" (*smārta*), and "the conventions of cultured people" (*śiṣṭāgamaḥ*)" (1.1–4); and *Vasiṣṭha*, after prioritizing Veda and tradition (*smṛti*), says that "the practice of cultured people (*śiṣṭācāraḥ*) becomes authoritative (*pramāṇam*)" only where these first two "do not address an issue" (1.4–5). Meanwhile (I think between the first three *dharmasūtras* and *Vasiṣṭha*[30]), *Manu* describes "the entire Veda, Tradition, the practice (*śīla*) of those who know the Veda" along with "the conduct (*ācāra*) of good people" (*sādhūnām*), and "what is pleasing to oneself" (*ātmanas tuṣṭiḥ*) as one apparently fourfold[31] "root of Law" (*dharmamūlam*). The Vedas, tradition or "textualized memory," and some kind of custom[32] in fact all go into making for these varied kinds of consensus: first, in *Āpastamba* and *Gautama*, the consensus of those who know *dharma*

27. *Buddhavacana* can cover not only what the Buddha said, but the texts that recount what he said, and what can be discerned by trained monks based on what he said or is said to have said. For some discussion, see Nattier [2003] 2005, 11–14.

28. See Olivelle 1999, 353: "Āpastamba, more than any other author, points to generally accepted custom as the basis of Law (*dharma*). He puts the Vedas last, in contrast to the other three who place it first." But last would not simply mean least.

29. See Olivelle 2005*b*, 168: *smṛti* begins as "a textualized form of memory"; cf. 171.

30. Note that right after discussing the sources and geography of *dharma*, *Vasiṣṭha* as it were quotes "Manu": "When there are no specific rules in vedic texts, Manu has said that one may follow the Laws of one's region, caste, and family" (*V* 1.17). See Hopkins 1882, 241 on this citation, and more below on his discovery of the two ways by which Vasiṣṭha cites "Manu."

31. See Lingat 1973, 6; Olivelle 2005*a*, 24, n. to *M* 2.6, on *Manu*'s use, like *Gautama*, of *śīla*, and the comment that "the distinction that commentators seek between 'practice' (*śīla*) and 'conduct' (*ācāra*) may be misplaced."

32. Variously called *ācāra* (*Ā* 1.1.1; *V* 1.5); *śīla* (*G* 1.2), and *āgama* (*B* 1.1.4), with "similar and overlapping semantic ranges" (Olivelle 2005*b*, 168). See also Olivelle 2004*a*, 506.

and the Vedas; and then, perhaps more strictly in *Baudhāyana*, the conventions of *śiṣṭas*, the "instructed" cultural elite.[33] The *dharmasūtra* tradition probably introduces the term *śiṣṭa* "about the same time" that the grammarian Patañjali uses it to define those who speak proper grammatical Sanskrit; and both Baudhāyana and Patañjali use it to introduce a newly conceived terrain called Āryavarta, the Land of the Āryas, as "the place where *śiṣṭas* live" (B 1.2.11 and 13)—a combination repeated not only in the *Vasiṣṭha* (Olivelle 2005*b*, 133–34) but also in the *Mahābhārata* (Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 27–28). Biardeau complements this perspective. On *Baudhāyana*'s earliest delimitation of the "land of the Āryas," she suggests that he is reclaiming the Indo-Gangetic plain for Brahmanical culture "in an epoch when, by every likelihood, the implantation of the Buddhists was a secret to no one" (72). As was noted in chapter 4, Buddhists seem to have had two views of the Kuru area within this region: that it was a dangerous place where, in a former life, the Bodhisattva once tamed a cannibal; and that it was a place where people would be distinctly prepared to hear some of the Buddha's subtler Dhamma talks.[34]

Biardeau also points to numerous ways[35] in which the earliest *dharmasūtras* are likely to have Buddhism in the "background" as their unacknowledged "ideological enemy"[36]—a term that is stronger than necessary for many passages in both traditions, but not for some,[37] of which I consider the following from *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* an instructive early case in point:

> Let him not follow the Laws (*dharmān*) for the sake of worldly benefits, for then the Laws produce no fruits at harvest time. It is like this. A man plants a mango tree to get fruits, but in addition he

33. Cf. *Mbh* 13.129.3–5: Śiva tells Umā that for the sake of *dharma* in the world, Brahmā created three eternal *dharmas* (*trayo dharmāḥ sanātanāḥ*): what is stated in the Veda as highest, what accords with *smṛti* treatises as next, and then what is declared that is based in the practices of Śiṣṭas (*śiṣṭāciṛṇaḥ paraḥ proktas*)—all while discussing "what is *dharma* among Brahmins."

34. See chapter 4 § B.1.d.i. According to *Manu* 2.17–23, there *dharma* gets increasingly pure as one moves inward through four rings that surround a center of the most exemplary conduct through the generations: (*a*) the Land of foreigners (Mlecchadeśa) surrounds (*b*) Āryāvarta; Āryāvarta encompasses (*c*) Madhyadeśa; Madhyadeśa surrounds the (*d*) Land of Brahmin Seers (*Brahmarṣideśa*) comprised of Kurukṣetra and the lands of the Matsyas, Pañcālas, and Śūrasenakas ("All the people on earth should learn their respective practices from a Brahmin born in that land"); and Brahmarṣideśa surrounds (*e*) the holiest center named Brahmāvarta where the Sarasvatī and Dṛśadvatī Rivers flow, and where "The conduct handed down from generation to generation among the social classes and the intermediate classes of that land is called the 'conduct of the good (*sadācāra*).'" See Olivelle 2005*a*, 43 on the possible Śuṅga period origins of the concept of Āryāvarta (which could make it later than the early Buddhist focus on the Kuru country). Cf. Bronkhorst 2007, 1–2 on changing definitions of this geography and his view of the "enormous divide that existed between Vedic culture and the culture of greater Magadha" (269).

35. For example, the *dharmasūtras*' codification and justification of Vedic ritual, including animal sacrifices, as *dharma*—something that both the Buddha and Aśoka find useless and delusionary; the increasing attention given to the king, and the stress on *dharma* as "merit," good quality," or virtue" (Biardeau 2002, 1: 69).

36. Biardeau 2002, I: 70, 82; see 65–83 on the *dharmasūtras*; also 85–96 on *Manu*.

37. See Tsuchida 1991, 91 making this point with regard to most but not all early Pāli Buddhist texts.

> obtains also shade and fragrance. In like manner, when a man follows the Law, he obtains, in addition, other benefits. Even if he does not obtain them, at least no harm is done to the Law (*na dharmahānir bhavati*). Let him not become vexed or easily deceived by the pronouncements of hypocrites, crooks, infidels, and fools. *Dharma* and *adharma* do not go about saying "Here we are!" Nor do the Gods, Gandharvas, or Ancestors tell us, "This is *dharma*," "This is *adharma*."[38] An activity that the Āryas praise is *dharma*, and what they deplore[39] is *adharma*. He should model his conduct after that which is unanimously approved in all regions by the Āryas who have been properly trained, who are elderly and self-possessed, and who are neither greedy nor deceitful. (*ĀpDhS* 1.20.1–8)[40]

In the rogues' gallery[41] just invoked, the "infidel" or *nāstika* is again a person of interest in opposition to the *āstika*, the "yea-sayer," literally, the "one who says 'It is.'" As Biardeau observes, "in the epic, *nāstika* is one of the possible designations of the Buddhists" (2002, 1: 75). Here, *Āpastamba* mentions *nāstikas* among those who, unlike the Gods, Gandharvas, and Ancestors, do, it seems, "go about saying, 'This is *dharma*.' This is *adharma*'"![42] Not only should one believe instead the consensual—indeed, the cross-regional consensual—approval of the Āryas; to the extend that one shouldn't believe such talking heads, the passage suggests a kind of self-validation of *dharma* similar to what we have seen *Manu* introduce as a new and most intriguing source of *dharma*: *ātmanas-tuṣṭi*, "what is pleasing to the self." Yet as *Āpastamba* goes on immediately to make clear, at least as far as he is concerned, not everyone has a self eligible for self-validation, for as regards the discernment of *dharma*, only Āryas have such a self.

It is important to distinguish the connotations of the term *ātmanas tuṣṭi* in *Manu* from its later uses in *dharmaśāstra*, and, still later, its possible implications for modern Indian jurisprudence. Donald Davis demonstrates that later *dharmaśāstra* interprets the term as a default position in resolving legal cases that cannot be decided by the other three criteria of Veda, custom, or tradition.

38. I follow Fitzgerald 2004*b*, 671 trans. for this line; the rest, with only slight changes, is from Olivelle 1999.

39. √*Garh*: accuse, charge with, reproach, blame, censure. Censuring Dharma/*dharma* itself occurs in two famous scenes in the *Mahābhārata*. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 274 on *Mbh* 18.2.50, where Yudhiṣṭhira does so; 2007*b*, 46 on 8.66.44, where Karṇa does so.

40. As Olivelle notes (2003, 57), the line may echo *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 1.11.4—a passage about consensus through Brahmins "devoted to the Law," *dharmakāma*. The *sūtra* passage puts more emphasis on "all regions."

41. The four words used have the following ranges: *kuhaka*—cheats, rogues, jugglers, impostors; *śaṭha*—cheats, rogues, fools; *nāstika*: naysayers, nihilists; and *bālavāda*: those who talk like children.

42. See Olivelle 2005*b*, 130–31: in the *Aṭṭakavagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, from what seems to be some of the earliest material in the Pāli canon, Buddhists themselves use *dhamma* negatively as a term by which other ascetic schools define something like their distinctive "views."

He opposes Menski's view that *ātmatuṣṭi* (for short) is important to a "self-controlled ordering" that "is the first and foremost method of 'finding' dharma."[43] For the "post-traditional" Menski, *ātmatuṣṭi* is the starting point for understanding, in current Hindu law, "the Hindu individual's rights to participate in the rule-ascertaining process" (126–27). Indeed, writes Menski, "Self-reflective contemplation should be sufficient to make individuals do the right thing at any time, which remains the simplest general paraphrase of dharma" (547). Obviously *Manu* is not post-traditionalist, and may have more in mind too than offering a fail-safe position. I believe that where *Manu* introduces the term, *ātmanas tuṣṭi* complements the kind of consensus among Āryas we have just met in *Āpastamba*. At several points, *Manu* seems to surround it with Upaniṣadic echoes. For instance, *Manu*'s main discussion of avoiding violence is introduced by three verses that seem to entail the notion:

> He should carefully avoid all activities that are under someone else's control (*paravaśaṃ karma*), and diligently pursue those that are under his own control (*ātmavaśam*). Whatever is under someone else's control—that is suffering; whatever is under one's own control—that is happiness. He should know that this, in a nutshell, is the definition of suffering and happiness. He should diligently engage in those activities that give him inner joy (*paritoṣo 'ntarātmanaḥ*) and avoid those that do not. (4.159–61)

Similarly, "What a man seeks to know with all his heart and is not ashamed to perform, at which the inner being (*ātman*) rejoices (*tuṣyati*)—that is the mark of the attribute of Goodness (*sattvaguṇa*)" (12.37).[44] In *Manu*, an implied consensus would back the one with the attribute of goodness who finds inner joy in having a self under his own control and no one else's.

It is thus useful to consider the ways that post-Vedic Brahmanical *dharma* texts construe consensus, and build toward it. Here we might expect to find some kind of differentiation analogous to what we found in chapter 4 among Buddhist texts, with some—even in the classification of Buddhist *suttas*—being more for in-house specialists and others more for public outreach.[45] The aphoristic *dharmasūtras*, like all *sūtras* in aphoristic style, are clearly works by and for learned experts to interpret and apply. The Sanskrit epics are clearly works designed for the widest possible publics. On this point, *Manu* lies somewhere quite precisely in between.

43. Davis 2007*b*, 279, citing Menski (2003) 2005, 126.

44. Cf. Olivelle 2005*a*, 244 n. to 2.6.

45. Johannes Bronkhorst (2010*a*) made such a point classifying some texts available to Brahmins during the classical period: Veda for "internal consumption"; the epics for "external consumption"; and works on statecraft being "mixed."

C. What's New with *Manu*

According to Olivelle, "Manu introduced two major innovations in comparison to the previous literature of the legal tradition, the *dharmasūtras*. First, he composed his text entirely in verse, using the popular simple *śloka* meter with four eight-syllable feet. Second, he set his text within a narrative structure that consists of a dialogue between an exalted being in the role of teacher and others desiring to learn from him" (2004*b*, xxiii; cf. 2005*a*, 25). We may speak of these two innovations as "verse composition" and a "frame story." Lingat mentions the same two when addressing the "three main respects" in which not only *Manu* but "the *dharma-śāstras* of . . . Yājñavalkya and Nārada, differ from the *dharma-sūtras*" (1973, 73). Along with treating verse composition under the heading of "form" and the frame story as a new way to formulate authorship and textual authority, Lingat offers a third difference under the heading of "subject matter": *Manu*'s greater attention to "the duties of the king, . . . including his judicial functions, and . . . what might be called the 'legislative element'" (Ibid.). Olivelle addresses this third difference as a separate "innovation": "The sections of Manu dealing with the king, statecraft, and especially judicial procedure, are either absent or poorly developed in the *Dharmasūtras*. It was Manu's innovation to include these discussions in his treatise" (2004*b*, xix; cf. 2005*a*, 20). In keeping major distinctions to two, Olivelle suggests a useful distinction between form and content: "At the substantive level, the greatest change in the content of the Dharmaśāstras was the incorporation of matters relating to the king, the state, and the judiciary (an area I will call *artha* for the sake of convenience)" (2005*b*, 175). Verse composition as form and the frame story as design both affect the totality of *Manu*, whereas substantive differences concern only portions, and thus proportions, of *Manu*'s text. Indeed, Lingat remarks in passing on another significant difference in content: in contrast to *Manu*, the *dharmasūtras* "contain little or no philosophical speculation" (1973, 74). It is thus possible to extract four important innovations: two matters of overall form and two having to do with content. Verse composition and the frame story, both matters of form, will be the topic of this section. Olivelle's "*artha*" nexus and Lingat's philosophical overtures, both matters of content, will be treated later and in passing.

On verse composition, Olivelle has written much of importance, but I believe that he, like all other *dharmaśāstra* scholars, draws up short on a simple and obvious point that nonetheless deserves greater consideration: that Manu is a poet. Long ago, Edward Washburn Hopkins raised the question of whether quotations of Manu in the *dharmasūtras* and the *Mahābhārata* were traceable to *Manu*, and found that usually they were not, and, moreover, that similar legal content would

sometimes appear in different meters and inverted verse structure, and that particularly in the area of *rājadharma*, where *Manu* expands the content, "the vast number of verses [in the *Mahābhārata*] identical with those in the Manu-treatise [were] not referred to it, or sometimes referred elsewhither" (1882, 250). Based on such findings, Hopkins submitted "that legal saws and maxims were couched in such general language and in such plastic swinging verse-form as to be handed down merely as a whole . . . [and] changed" from text to text: "I fancy they did not lay much stress on exactness. . . . They did not quote, they paraphrased" (1882, 250). Olivelle rightly criticizes Hopkins for being the first to hypothesize from such findings that both *Manu* and the *Mahābhārata* are compositions collated over centuries from material that was "floating in the mouths of people and handed down from generation to generation . . . divorced from authorial intent and agency and from social, political, and economic context."[46] But Hopkins's findings on the plasticity of citations and maxims in these texts are solid enough to cast doubt on any kind of straightforward linear development from the *dharmasūtras* to *Manu*, and on any likely direct dependence of either *Manu* on the *Mahābhārata* or the reverse.[47] While I believe the *Mahābhārata* is probably earlier than *Manu*, and will cite a number of pointers toward that conclusion, I think we must frame the question without notions of dependency or—with the exception of some verse maxims, which we should not expect to explain everything—of prior texts from which each independently borrows.

Taking note that *Manu* is "older than any of the other metrical *Dharmaśāstras*" (2004*b*, xxii), Olivelle's way of handling Manu's innovation in using verse is also to call attention to the tradition of citing verse maxims in the early prose Upaniṣads, some early Buddhist texts (2005*a*, 6), and in most of the *Dharmasūtras*. "It appears that during the last few centuries prior to the common era *ślokas* had assumed an aura of authority, and proverbial wisdom was transmitted as memorable verses. The *logical outcome* of this

46. Olivelle 2005*a*, 3, citing Hopkins 1882, 268. Cf. Olivelle 2005*a*, 23 on the similar views of Bühler: that both the *Mahābhārata* and *Manu* "drew on the same stock of 'floating proverbial wisdom'" (see Bühler ([1886] 1969, lxxiv).

47. Olivelle views this second point differently: "The references and citations collected by Hopkins, I think, make a compelling case that the author(s) of the epic knew of and drew upon material from [*Manu*]" (2005*a*, 23). He answers Bühler's point about the *Mahābhārata*'s lack of exact replication of *Manu* ([1886] 1969, lxxiv–xcii) by ascribing differences and confusions to "the team of workers engaged in the epic enterprise," citing my view on the epic's authorship by committee. But then he leans toward Fitzgerald's view that it underwent a second Gupta redaction, giving him room to assign *Manu* to a much later date (2005*a*, 23–24 n. 41). Bronkhorst still favors the idea of a Gupta redaction for such reasons (in press; see chapter 1 n. 11), but with no new arguments for it. I think Hopkins and Bühler were rightly cautious (see Bühler ([1886] 1969, lxxv) about the relation between the epic and *Manu*, and I have given many reasons to reject a "second Gupta redaction" of the *Mbh* (Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 25–30; 2004*a*, 205–6, 213, 220; 2005*a*, 458–61, 486–93; 2005*c*, 87; 2005*d*, 242–46; 2006*a*, 227–33, 249–53; 2009*a*, 196–210; 2009*b*; forthcoming-*a*; forthcoming-*d*), which has only fueled stratigraphic fancies and has never had a convincing Gupta rationale.

tendency was for texts themselves to be composed in verse, lending authority to the text by its very literary genre."[48] Manu's "use of verse . . ., therefore, must have been part of a deliberate plan to lend the kind of authority to his text that would come only through this literary genre" (2004*b*, xxiv). We must, however, separate this approach's two components: the well-documented fact that the legal tradition joins with some others in imparting an aura of authority to verse maxims, and Olivelle's theory of a "logical outcome." I believe that we are left with something a little hard to square in Olivelle's theory: that to speak of an "innovation" or even a "deliberate plan" as a "logical outcome" is to sell it a bit short.[49] Indeed, if we follow Olivelle's "hypothesis that Gautama had assumed prominence as the chief Dharmasūtra by the time *Manu* was composed" (Olivelle 2005*b*, 273), Manu's innovation of composing in verse cannot just be the "logical outcome" of a *dharmasūtra* tendency. Rather, as Olivelle amply demonstrates under the title "Manu and Gautama: A Study of Śāstric Intertextuality" (2005*b*, 261–74), among the earlier *dharmasūtras*, the *Gautama Dharmasūtra* was Manu's main model and the most frequent source for versification of specific *sūtras*. In composing in verse, Manu thus makes a deliberate and contrastive departure from his likely "paradigm"[50] among the *dharmasūtras*, since *Gautama* is the only one of them that is composed entirely in prose.

It would thus appear that *Manu*'s intertextual situation must be wider and more complex than just the linear legal or Śāstric one, or the certainly less cogent one of borrowing the aura of Śāstric, early Upaniṣadic, and early Buddhist aphoristic verse. Olivelle gives a brief next thought to such a wider setting, but only as an aside to his main and abiding interest, "the legal tradition": "We have, of course, the parallel examples of the epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* composed in verse and claiming religious authority. The legal tradition followed the tradition blazed by Manu; all later *Dharmaśāstras* are written in verse."[51] Lingat makes a similar and slightly more bridging nod toward the epics, noting that the *dharmaśāstras* are composed "entirely in verse, the meter, *śloka* (*anuṣṭubh*), being used in the two great epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. The style is less archaic and very close to classical Sanskrit"

48. Olivelle 2005*a*, 26, which slightly modifies 2004*b*, xxiv; my emphasis.

49. Bühler creates a similar impression that "it is no more than might be expected" that the stock of metrical maxims "should have gradually [been] augmented" ([1886] 1969, xci); cf. also Brick 2006, 299–301, following Olivelle's explanation to account for changes in the meaning of *smṛti* from quotable "tradition" to literary category.

50. Olivelle supplies "evidence that *Gautama* had risen to prominence as the first and perhaps the paradigmatic Dharmaśāstra" at least by the seventh-century CE (2005*b*, 272–73).

51. Olivelle 2004*b*, xxiv; after this same sentence, 2005*a*, 26 goes on to say that this "move away from prose . . . continues" in the Purāṇas, while "[t]he *artha* and *kāma* traditions continued to produce prose works, as did the ritual, philosophical, and grammatical traditions."

(1973, 73). But if, as I think we will be able to demonstrate, the epics provide more than just "parallel examples" and "archaic" stylistic precedents, then the question of *Manu*'s "genre" context must be extended to them more seriously.

The *Mahābhārata* has some interesting things to say about its relation to other works of (presumably classical) poetry.[52] Near the beginning of its first *adhyāya*, before the bard Ugraśravas opens his storytelling to the (celestial) Ṛṣis of the Naimiṣa Forest, he announces:

> I will proclaim the thought entire of the infinitely splendid Vyāsa. Some poets (*kavayaḥ*) have told it before, others tell it now, and others too will tell this history (*itihāsa*) on earth. It is indeed a great erudition (*mahaj jñānam*) established in the three worlds that is held (*dhāryate*) by the twiceborn in its particulars and totalities. (1.1.23–25)

Then, a little further along, toward the end of the second *adhyāya*, the bard adds:

> From this supreme history (*itihāsa*) arise the inspirations of poets (*jāyante kavibuddhayaḥ*), just as the configurations of the three worlds[53] arise from the five elements. Ancient lore (*purāṇa*) turns in the compass of this narrative (*ākhyāna*), O twiceborns, just as the four classes of creatures (turn) in the compass of space. Works of every quality resort to this narrative even as the interacting senses resort to the manifold workings of the mind. There is no story (*kathā*) on earth that hasn't resorted to this narrative, even as support for the body comes from resorting to food. This narrative is lived on by all the best poets even as a lord is born with servants wishing for promotion.[54]

Taken together in sequence, these two frame passages—both of which, let us note (see also Hiltebeitel 2011*a*, chapter 4), identify the *Mahābhārata* by its primary genre identification of *itihāsa*, "history" (literally, "so indeed it was")—first have the bard locate the text as a possession of Brahmins. That is, it is "held" (*dhāryate*)—from √*dhṛ*—by the "twiceborn," a term by which

52. These two paragraphs reconsider Hiltebeitel 2008*a*, 201–10 on the two epics in the light also of *Manu*.

53. 1.2.273d: *lokasaṃvidhayas trayaḥ*; Van Buitenen (1973, 43) trans. Ganguli [1884–96] 1970, I, 35 has "the formation of the three worlds." Nīlakaṇṭha gives a Vedanticizing construal *ādhyātmādhibhūtādhidaivānāṃ samyāgvidhayo racanā* (Kinjawadekar, ed. 1929–36, 1: 39) that would suggest "the three dispositions of the world."

54. *Mbh* 1.2.237–41:
itihāsottamād asmāj jāyante kavibuddhayaḥ/ pañcabhya iva bhūtebhyo lokasaṃvidhayas trayaḥ//
asyākhyānasya viṣaye purāṇaṃ vartate dvijāḥ/ antarikṣasya viṣaye prajā iva caturvidhāḥ//
kriyāguṇānāṃ sarveṣaṃ idam ākhyānam āśrayaḥ/ indriyaṇāṃ samastānāṃ citrā iva manaḥkriyāḥ//
anāśrityaitad ākhyānaṃ kathā bhuvi na vidyate/ āhāram anapāśritya śarīrasyeva dhāraṇam//
idaṃ sarvaiḥ kavivarair ākhyānam upajīvyate/ udayaprepsubhir bhṛtyair abhijāta ivēśvaraḥ

the *Mahābhārata* most typically means Brahmins, though we may also detect an implication that what Brahmins "hold" as *dharma* would pertain not only to other "twiceborn" Āryas but to all beings. Then, having reported that he has heard the *Mahābhārata*'s debut recital in the world of men at King Janamejaya's snake sacrifice, the bard indicates that, now that it is in that world of men for others to resort to, other poets will be inspired there by it as they seek to stand on its shoulders. Indeed, the bard seems to sense that other works of poetry have emerged on the horizon with their authors poised to do just that.

I believe this possibility should be considered. Just as there is a question of the relation between the *Rāmāyaṇa* poet and the sage Vālmīki, who is mentioned fairly frequently in the *Mahābhārata*,[55] there is the question of the relationship between the *Manu* poet and the sage Manu, more frequently mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, and often as a primal lawgiver in connection with epigrammatic verses on *dharma* and the promulgation of *śāstras*.[56] Considering the overlapping audiences or reading communities targeted by these works, with all three envisioning ideal kingdoms with cities,[57] and *Manu* mentioning Brahmins, moneylenders, merchants, and kings in that order as the four who prosper while others suffer,[58] it is not impossible that Vālmīki and Manu could be noms de plume taken up from the *Mahābhārata* by poets familiar with that text. Indeed, if the *Mahābhārata* is a work of composite authorship, "Vālmīki" and "Manu" may even have been apprentice-contributors, or at least persons familiar with the *Mahābhārata* project.[59] To speak of the temporal priority of the *Mahābhārata* over the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Manu* is thus not to rule out the possibility that the last two might have been started before the *Mahābhārata* was finished.

55. See 1.50.14 (Vālmīki praised by Āstīka for his gentle firmness), 2.7.14 (among many famous Ṛṣis in Indra's *sabhā* or hall), 3.83.102 (among select Ṛṣis waiting for the Pāṇḍavas on pilgrimage), 5.81.27 (among illustrious Ṛṣis attending Kṛṣṇa's departure for Hāstinapura to confront the Kauravas), 12.200.4 (among Ṛṣis cited by Bhīṣma regarding Govinda), and 13.18.7 (addressing Yudhiṣṭhira regarding Śiva, who absolved Vālmīki of a charge of Brahmanicide and told him, "Your fame shall be foremost (*yaśas te 'gryaṃ bhaviṣyati*)" (8f).

56. See Hopkins 1882, 247–50, 254–55 (see *Mbh* 12.322.26–42 and 804* on the "treatise embracing worldly dharma [*lokadharma*]" of the Citraśikhaṇḍins, whose laws are to be declared by Manu, son of the Self-existent [41cd]; 12.37.1–6; 12.259.35: "Manu, son of the Self-existent, out of pity for his creatures, declared the law, that the great fruit thereof might not perish."), 262, 264. See more widely 251 ff., beginning, "I come now to Manu himself. God, creator, demi-god, king, and law-maker—these are his roles."

57. See *M* 7.115–17; *Mbh* 3.33.24cd, where, early in their forest exile, Draupadī tells Yudhiṣṭhira that "the success of houses and cities is caused by man (*agāranagarāṇāṃ hi siddhiḥ puruṣahaitukī*)." Cf. *Mbh* 6.62.40 on the creation *yuga* by *yuga* of seagirt cities (*purīs*).

58. *M* 8.169; *Manu* has a penchant for listing things in order (*anupūrvaśas, anupūrvyeṇa, kramaśas, yathākramam*, etc.). I would suggest that one could think of the four mentioned here as the chief beneficiaries of *Manu*.

59. Cf. Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 169, attempting to imagine the joint authorship of the *Mbh*: "The inner core, the sattrins or committee, would no doubt have had a philosopher and a dharmaśāstra connoisseur among them. . . ."

I offer this approach to the relation between these texts not because it can be supported by conclusive evidence, but because it opens what I believe is a fruitful perspective on several fronts that bear on how we understand the history of *dharma*. First, it suggests that there could be something significant to draw from *dharma*'s beginnings in the *Ṛgveda* not as a legal term but as an (often enigmatic) coinage of poets. Second, it takes note of a recurring Brahmanical pattern. *Manu* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* can be said to tighten up the more pluralistic, flexible, and "broad" *dharma* of the *Mahābhārata* much in the way that the three other probably later *dharmasūtras* tighten up the *dharma* of *Āpastamba* (Olivelle 1999, xxxix). For in tone, at least, the *Mahābhārata* is closer to *Āpastamba*, and specifically so where Āpastamba allows that one may learn aspects of *dharma* from women and Śūdras,[60] and implies that *dharma* and *adharma* are too subtle to "go about saying 'Here we are!'" (Ibid.). Third, it offers a way to map the relation of *dharma* and *bhakti* in these three texts without mapping *bhakti* out of the epics (see chapter 12). Fourth, there is more to say about Manu's place as a poet within what Olivelle calls "the legal tradition" itself. Yājñavalkya and Nārada, Manu's successors in writing Smṛtis, stay in the *śloka* verse more as legislators than philosophers or poets, at which they are not Manu's match. Indeed, their verse sometimes condenses and strives for precision (Lingat 1973, 98, 102) almost to the point of reverting to the aphoristic. As Lingat says of *Nārada*, "The frequent philosophical or moral speculations of Manu have entirely disappeared" (1973, 103); and of *Yājñavalkya*, "We are struck, especially if we have just read Manu, by the sober tone, the concise style, and the strictness with which the topics are arranged. We find none of those lyrical flights which are, after all, the literary beauty of Manu" (1973, 98). Manu's achievement thus stands out—indeed, rather daringly. It is much easier to write poetry about gods and great heroes and heroines than to write poetry about laws.

Much of our discussion of *Manu* will revolve around this point, and I believe many of the passages I quote (and have cited already) support it without the need to repeatedly call attention to it. Yet it is important not to put too much of a burden on it. For one thing, Manu is modest. His text makes no "epic" claims about its poetry being the source of other poetic works, or even, as the *Rāmāyaṇa* does, of being the very "first poem" and the source of the *śloka* meter (see below). It is also significant that whereas both epics, but especially the *Mahābhārata*, punctuate their prevailing *śloka* narration with what usually

60. *Ā* 2.15.9; 29.11, 15; Olivelle 2005*a*, 39–40; compare especially the *Mahābhārata*'s *Pativratā-Upākhyāna* (3.196–206) about a Brahmin who learns *dharma* from both a woman and a Śūdra. Vyāsa's son with a Śūdra woman (Vidura) is major interpreter of *dharma*, and Vyāsa himself has a fisherwoman (probably Śūdra) mother (see chapter 8). In contrast, for *Manu*, see Olivelle 2005*a*, 39–40 on Śūdra as a "code word" for Buddhists, etc. For passages that might bear this out, see *Manu* 4.61; 4.194; 4.218. See 8.20–22 forbidding Śūdras as legal interpreters. The *Rāmāyaṇa* has Rāma kill a Śūdra for performing asceticism (*Rām* 7.64–67).

seem to be attention-catching verses or strings of them in the more complex *triṣṭubh* meter and its variants, and sometimes punctate the strings with even more dramatically dissonant irregular *triṣṭubhs*,[61] Manu sticks entirely to the workhorse *śloka*. Indeed, one of the cases noted by Hopkins in which a *śloka* of *Manu* corresponds to another author's *triṣṭubh* is *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* 19.37, which thus "cites" or "quotes" in *triṣṭubh* what it alleges to have been a "Mānavan *śloka*"! *Vasiṣṭha* has:

> With reference to taxes, they also quote this verse of Manu (*śulke cāpi mānavaṃ ślokam udāharanti*): "There is no tax when the sum is less than one Kārṣapaṇa, as also on craftsmen, children, and messengers; on what is received as alms or what remains after a robbery; and on vedic scholars, wandering ascetics, and sacrifices." (*V* 19.37; Olivelle 1999, 301; 2003, 428–29)

The alleged quote has very little in common with any particular verse in *Manu*, which Hopkins attempts to explain by suggesting that *Vasiṣṭha* would be citing an earlier form of *Manu* that would have been "originally written" with "many" *triṣṭubh* verses, and that it would now "be impossible to find the same verse in our treatise," which, "in shortening the verse to adapt it to its present metre," would have left "part of the original . . . omitted."[62] But for most scholars today, *Manu* is what it is, and Hopkins's idea that there would have been some prior *Manu* behind *Manu* has few followers, as can also be said for the idea that *Manu* would have versified a prior largely prose and entirely hypothetical *Mānava Dharmasūtra*,[63] which Hopkins was among the earliest epic and *dharmaśāstra* scholars to sensibly reject (1882, 267, 271). As Olivelle has demonstrated, where *Manu* versifies, its primary source is *Gautama*.

But more important, Hopkins's explanation is not only out of favor and uneconomical, it undercuts what I consider to be a major but seemingly

61. See Fitzgerald 2005, 138 on "[t]heir psychological functioning, their aesthetic qualities, their interrelationship to other musical and acoustic elements of literary composition"; 146 on "continuous literary aggregation of stanzas that constitute a 'passage' . . . to create literary effects in a literary context," and the question, "Does the passage connect with surrounding *ślokas* or stanzas in fancy meters?" As Fitzgerald mentions, "many of the epic's triṣṭubh passages are actually very short" (147). See Söhnen-Thieme 1999, 150 on usages in the dice match scene of Book 2: "Whereas the triṣṭubh passages provide dialogues and discussions, the anuṣṭubh verses serve various purposes, the most prominent being narration of action." I emphasize only specific features of these authors' discussions; cf. Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 18 n. 70.

62. Hopkins 1882, 243. The *Manu* verse (*M* 10.120) that Hopkins cites, while excusing it for its dissimilarity on metrical grounds, has only two points in common: a limit of 1 Kārṣapaṇa below which nothing can be taken from certain groups, though not as taxes but by a conquering king; and the inclusion of craftsmen among an otherwise altogether different group (Śūdras and artisans) in which, however, instead of being exempt from taxes they are among those from whom a conquering king can demand services!

63. Bronkhorst in press seems to be a holdout; cf. Bronkhorst 1985*b*.

forgotten discovery that the young Hopkins himself made here: that *Vasiṣṭha* cites Manu and *Manu* in two different ways: "Now it appears to me that there is an interesting difference in the way in which his quotations are made." I notice that when a passage begins with 'Manu said (*abravīt*),' one finds nothing in *Manu* exactly corresponding to it"; but "whenever *Vāsiṣṭha* gives a quotation which answers exactly to some verse in our present M-treatise, he always introduces it with the words 'now they relate on this point a Manavan verse' (*mānavaṃ cā'tra çlokam udāharanti*)" (1882, 241)—or some close variation, as just cited above in the case where Hopkins most stretches the point about "answering exactly." Whereas there is some minimal *dharmasūtra* precedent for quoting Manu by the first formula ("he said"), there is none for quoting *Manu* using this second formula involving citation by *śloka* along with a quotative phrase with *udāharanti*, "they quote," preceded by *atha* in the *dharmasūtras* or *atra* in the *Mahābhārata*.[64] Without mentioning Manu, however, this formula is used frequently in the *dharmasūtras* by both *Āpastamba* and *Baudhāyana* (but not by *Gautama*). *Āpastamba*, who is interesting not only for being probably the earliest of the four surviving *dharmasūtrakāras* but for its familiarity with something it calls the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, begins with ten usages. Two of these refer to what Olivelle (1999, 30) translates as "two verses from a Purāṇa" (*purāṇe ślokau*), one involving a godly quote from Prajāpati and the other a mythological anecdote (*Ā* 1.19.13; 2.23.3–5). Others recount illustrative stories (notably 1.22.3–8, an allegory of the eternal being residing in the cave in the heart; 1.32.23, quoting Mṛtyu [Death]; and 2.13.6, pertaining to paternity once one is in the abode of Yama). Most of the rest are just proverbial sayings (e.g., 1.19.15; 25.9–10; 35.23–31.1; 2.9.13; 2.17.7–8). *Baudhāyana* then generalizes the practice, using the *athāpy udāharanti* phrasing forty-nine times virtually anywhere it turns from prose to a quoted verse, one of which is *Baudhāyana*'s version of why a woman must be nonindependent through the three phases of her life (*B* 2.3.45), whose most quoted version of which is *Manu* 5.147–48 (see chapter 8). *Baudhāyana* is proportionally less inclined to relate the phrase to mythical anecdotes, of which I note only three instances (2.3.31–35, similar in part to *Ā* 2.13.6; *B* 2.4.26, recalling a dialogue between the two wives of the *Mahābhārata*'s Yayāti; and 2.11.28 on the origin of the *āśramas*). And unlike *Āpastamba*, it never conjoins the quotative phrase with the term *purāṇa*. *Gautama* then clears the quotative phrase out entirely from its

64. See Tokunaga 2009*a*, 28: "The particle *atha*, which matches the style of the treatise, was changed to *atra* ('as to this [point of your question]') in the dialogue of the *Mahābhārata*. Just as *atrāpi udāharanti* corroborates an instruction in the *Mahābhārata*, so *athāpy udāharanti* introduces in the Dharmasūtras a *śloka* text as an illustration or corroboration (*arthavāda*) of the injunction (*vidhi*) found in the preceding *sūtra*."

entirely prose *dharmasūtra*, yet still cites purāṇa.[65] Against this background where *purāṇa* overlaps with *dharmaśāstra*, we cannot expect the *Mahābhārata* to be too specific when it mentions either of them.

It is probably revealing that only the two earliest dharmaśāstric texts, *Āpastamba* and *Gautama*, refer to *purāṇa* as authoritative on *dharma*. Meanwhile, whereas *Vasiṣṭha* is the first and only *dharmasūtra* to use the quotative phrase with the source as Manu, or more exactly, a "Mānavan *śloka*," the *Mahābhārata* is the first and only one of these texts to use it with the phrase *itihāsam purātanam* and thus, moreover, to use it in conjunction not only with the phrase but with the term *itihāsa*, "history" (see Hiltebeitel 2011*a*, chapter 4). None of these other authors link quotations about *dharma* with the term *itihāsa*, even though all the *dharmasūtras* but *Āpastamba* use the term *itihāsapurāṇa*, albeit in each case only once (*G* 1.8.6; *B* 2.9.14; V 27.6).[66] The *Mahābhārata* uses the *atrāpy udāharanti* phrasing liberally, especially in the *dharma* instructions of its twelfth and thirteenth Books, while *Manu* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, like *Gautama*, do not use it at all.[67] It would make an interesting study to look into the ways that four of these classical *dharma* texts (*Āpastamba*, *Baudhāyana*, *Vasiṣṭha*, and the *Mahābhārata*) use the *athāpy/atrāpy udāharanti* formula while three (*Gautama*, *Manu*, and the *Rāmāyaṇa*) do not, but one of the reasons why seems fairly clear. As I believe can be generalized from what I have tried to show in the case of the *Mahābhārata*'s use of this formula (Hiltebeitel 2001*b*), the intertextual citational interest of the first group bears a certain resemblance to a scholarly apparatus of footnotes that would be pertinent to texts that reflect debates of a scholarly tradition on *dharma* as legal precedent, and take some delight in absorbing themselves in a world of varied and often conflicting views about it. If this is the case, it would suggest that the

65. See Rocher 1986, 85–88, beginning, "The purāṇas are also closely related to the dharmaśāstras. In fact, the purāṇas are said to be dharmaśāstras. . . . From the time of the early dharmasūtras purāṇas are referred to among the sources of dharma. Gautama (11.19) requires the king to administer justice in accordance with the Veda, the Dharmaśāstra, the Aṅgas, the Upavedas, and 'the Purāṇa.' "

66. I avoid discussing the *Arthaśāstra*, which subordinates *dharma* to *artha*. It does cite others' views (e.g., 1.4.6), but not by this formula.

67. Hopkins 1882, 259–61 cites what seem to be the only two *Mbh* passages that link the name Manu (or *a* Manu) with *ślokas*. Neither uses the *udāharanti* citation, which the *Mbh* uses widely with other authoritative sources, although the second passage uses the same verb. 12.56.23 mentions two *ślokas* "sung (*gitāu*) by Manu," of which 12.56.24 is identical with *Manu* 9.321 (and *Mbh* 5.15.32, where, as Hopkins cutely puts it, it is "an original remark by Agni"), while its sequel verse is untraceable to *Manu*. Bühler considered the combination of citing "Manu" with this equivalence in the next verse (about how fire, the Kṣatra, and metal come from water, the Brahman, and stone respectively, and can be quenched by them) to be one of two pieces of "really indisputable evidence" that the authors of *Mbh* Books 12 and 13 "knew a Mānava Dharmaśāstra not identical but closely connected with our Smṛti" ([1886] 1969, lxxv). But he still has some caution and is relying on lost originals and textual stratification. *Mbh* 12.57.43 mentions "two *ślokas* cited (*udāhṛtau*) by Manu Prācetasa," who seems to be a different Manu (Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 304 n.) and is in any case the quoter rather than the quoted, with no correspondence in *Manu*.

second group would be one of texts that claim authority independent of and above that nexus, no doubt each for its own reasons but in each case in the name of some kind of streamlining and moral rearmament.[68] This point may now be enriched by a brilliant point made by Muneo Tokunaga: that the *Mahābhārata*'s use of this formula treats the informative narrative told as exemplum as the third member of the classical syllogism to provide illustration or corroboration of the speaker's thesis.[69] Since, as we have seen, the *Mahābhārata*'s primary self-identifying genre term is *itihāsa*, we may say that it presents its leading characters not only as "living history" but as interested in hearing it and citing it in support of their varied views on what we may call "precedent," and in some cases "legal precedent," especially in the *Rājadharma* section of Book 12, the *Śāntiparvan*.[70]

Yet as regards the matter at hand, what seems to have been missed here, even by Hopkins, is that *Vasiṣṭha* consistently knows *Manu* as a *śloka* text. To be sure, Vasiṣṭha is free to attribute things to Manu that one might not find in *Manu* and even to cite as "Mānavan" an absent *śloka* in *triṣṭubh*. But in the other cases where he invokes this second formula, Vasiṣṭha takes fewer such liberties and, as Hopkins shows, answers to *Manu* more closely.[71] Hopkins thus offers a good reason here, despite himself, to suspect that in being the first *dharmasūtrakāra* to recognize Manu as having composed in *ślokas*, *Vasiṣṭha* would be younger than *Manu*.

68. Cf. Tokunaga 2009, 28–29, observing the same distribution and tracing "the stock phrase *athāpyudāharanti* further back to the Gṛhyasūtras," his explanation for its absence from the *Rāmāyaṇa* being that it "stands free from the influence of Vedic exegesis . . . at the beginning of a new era of Sanskrit literature culminating in classical Kāvya literature."

69. Tokunaga shows that in such usages, "*itihāsas* correspond to the third member of the *pañcāvayava* syllogism of *parārthānumāna* in the classical Indian logic. That means, *itihāsa* plays the role of illustration or corroboration of the instruction or thesis. . . . It is therefore quite appropriate that an *itihāsa* is quoted by the word *udāharanti*, the noun form of which is *udāharaṇa*, one of the terms for the third member of the syllogism" (2009*a*, 24–25). Tokunaga thinks it "is highly probable that *itihāsa* was originally the designation of a text not according to its substance or form, but according to its use in a didactic discussion" (26–27), and shows that *Mbh* usages typically occur with instruction either before or after the formula, with the instruction being about factual, moral, political, philosophical, or religious matters.

70. Since I see the *Mahābhārata*'s genric and quotative usages going hand in hand, I do not, however, follow Tokunaga's idea that the "moral (or dharmic) instructions" found mainly in the *Rājadharma* mark the point from which the quotative usage "spread" to later parts of the epic (2009*a*, 27), or that usages of *itihāsa* to characterize the epic in its frames result from "the long history of [its] textual development" as it "gradually changed its nature under the influence of Vedic exegesis" (29).

71. See Hopkins 1882, 242–43, citing *Vasiṣṭha* 3.2 ["On this point they cite a verse by Manu: When, without studying the Veda, a twice-born man strives after other matters, he quickly sinks to the level of a Śūdra in this very life together with his descendants"] as equivalent to *M* 2.168; *Vasiṣṭha* 13.16: ["In this connection, they cite this verse from Manu: Even after accepting fruits, water, sesame seeds, foodstuffs, or anything else given at an ancestral offering, vedic recitation is suspended; a Brahmin's hand, tradition says, is in his mouth"] as close, with some variant readings, to *M* 4.117 (Olivelle 1999, 282 notes that *V* 13.16 has a variant at *B* 21.8–10n); and *Vasiṣṭha* 4.5–7 as having a complex relation to *M* 5.41 and 48.

This would of course bolster our sense that *Manu* could be close in time to the *Mahābhārata*, for Olivelle dates *Vasiṣṭha* to the first-century CE (1999, xxviii–xxxiv) or a little thereafter (2005*a*, 20–21 n. 32). But it does not support Olivelle's dating of *Manu* as posterior to all the *dharmasūtras* including *Vasiṣṭha*, which he bases mainly on *Manu*'s "clear advances in thinking on many fronts, especially in the sections relating to statecraft, royal functions, and judicial procedure" (2005*a*, 20).[72] Nor does it support his dating of the *Mahābhārata* to a time later than *Manu*, which he finds more likely than the reverse on the grounds that "a narrative epic would draw on expert *śāstras* for its discussion of legal matters than the other way round" (Olivelle 2005*a*, 23; see n. 47 above). On the first point, however, one need not assume that a *dharmasūtrakāra* like Vasiṣṭha would interest himself in *Manu*'s areas of expansion when his own genre would have directed him mainly to the "*Mānavan* ślokas" concerned with matters treated by the other *dharmasūtrakāras* before both of them.[73] And as to dating *Manu* with the *Mahābhārata* after it, I believe that Olivelle has pushed too hard on the lower limit for *Manu*. But whether Olivelle is right about *Manu*'s dates or not, a late date for *Manu* need not have any bearing on the dating of the *Mahābhārata*, which could still be thoroughly or mostly earlier than *Manu*.[74]

Olivelle gives *Manu* a likely date "between the first century BCE and the second century CE" (2004*b*, xxiii) or as late even as the "2nd–3rd centuries CE" (2005*a*, 25), and, although he considers several factors that could place it early in this span, he favors such later placement due to the possibility that *Manu*'s mention of gold coins could be evidence for a time not before "the earliest native gold coins discovered in India" from the second-century CE Kushana dynasty.

72. Bronkhorst in press also views *Vasiṣṭha* as most likely posterior to *Manu*, contra Olivelle, on the grounds of *Vasiṣṭha*'s citing two "almost identical" "*mānava ślokas*" at *V* 3.2 (similar to *M* 2.168, as mentioned in the previous note), and *V* 20.18 (similar to *M* 11.152). But he draws no inference from their being *ślokas* in *Manu*. His main interest in Hopkins's article is to stratify the *Mahābhārata*'s citations of "Manu" in accord with Hopkins's observation that "[n]ot more than half" of what the *Mbh* ascribes to "Manu" can be found in *Manu* (1882, 268).

73. See Olivelle 2005*c*, 2: "Vasiṣṭha is the only [*dharmasūtra*] author concerned about meat eating, indicating that he is living at a time when vegetarianism may have been on the rise"—a topic that interests *Manu* (5.48–52, similar to *V* 4.7a–c, which quotes "Manu" (*abravīn manuḥ*); cf. *M* 5.56; 6.05); and one that also concerns the *Mbh* (see *Mbh* 12.323–24; Sutton 2000, 85, 66, 90, 105, 310, 323). Note also the other two topics of *Vasiṣṭha* that Olivelle shows to be unparalleled in the other *dharmasūtras*: one, *Vasiṣṭha*'s general comments on women (*V* 5.1–5) could be taken to outdo *Manu*'s notorious verse 5.147 on women's nonindependence, while *V* 28.7, which seems to finally answer what it takes for women to fall from caste, comes within a probably late *versified* addendum to *Vasiṣṭha* (Olivelle 1999, 397; 2005*c*, 16, 88); the other, the king's control of the economy in the capital, including weights and measures (*V* 19.13–16; Olivelle 1999, 395; 2005*c*, 30, 212; cf. *M* 8.132–37; 403). To make this argument requires only that *Vasiṣṭha* would know of *Manu* as a poetic text and add some points of novel interest on topics already of concern, not that *Vasiṣṭha* would have been greatly influenced by or dependent on *Manu*.

74. Cf. Biardeau 2002, 1: 85 on these matters. Leaving *Vasiṣṭha* aside (as if not germane to the primary developments up to *Manu*?), she says *Manu* "could be posterior" to the other three, and "could also mark a certain distance in relation to their content." It is also "possible" that *Manu* "already knows the *Mahābhārata*, indeed the *Rāmāyaṇa*."

But this may be less decisive than it looks, for as Olivelle admits, "It is, of course, impossible to say from the archaeological absence that gold coins were not minted earlier" (2004*b*, xxiii). For instance, in the so-called "early" *Sutta Nipāta*, one hears the story of Bāvarī, a Brahmin who went south, who was one day asked by another Brahmin for "five hundred gold pieces, but Bāvarī was too poor to give him such a sum" (Lamotte 1988, 347). Gold pieces may not be minted coins.[75] But even as some other kind of currency they complicate the use of gold coins for dating texts. The story places Bāvarī in the Deccan (Dakṣiṇāpatha) on the Godavarī River, which means that wherever they came from, gold pieces were currency among Brahmins in central India in an "early" Buddhist *sutta*. They could have come from Bactria, where, according to Falk, Graeco-Bactrian kings minted gold coins as early as 170 BCE (2006*a*, 147). The *Mahābhārata* knows this Afghan area well enough for its royal family to have wooed brides from it twice in the persons of Gāndhārī and Mādrī, who is also called Bāhlakī, "woman of Balkh" (*Mbh* 1.116.21a). Such familiarity could contextualize a hypothetical familiarity with that area's currency, especially in the case of Mādrī who was only available to Pāṇḍu (the Pāṇḍavas' putative father) by accepting the Madra custom of paying for the bride (see chapter 8). One would also need to consider the Buddhists' tenth precept that monks could not handle gold or silver, which seems to imply coins (see Gombrich 1988, 103).

In any case, however modest Manu is about being a poet, I think it will be profitable to follow Vasiṣṭha's cue in recognizing him as one through his "verse," and profitable as well to keep him close to the epics not only by their common verse composition but as their near contemporary. To begin with, although it is not one of the fruits of considering Manu as a poet, I consider Olivelle's brilliant discovery of the "deep structure" of *Manu* to be one of the things that falls within Manu's poetic range. Olivelle has detected a "signature of Manu": the use in "transitional verses" of the expression *nibodhata*, enjoining the reader to "learn." The placement of these transitional verses yields a text sectioned into four main though uneven parts: a "preamble" (the frame story on the "Origin of the World": 1.1–119); an "introduction" (on the "Sources of Law": 2.1–24); a long "main section" on the "*Dharma* of the Four Social Classes" (with major subsections and sub-subsections also marked off by telltale transitional verses: 2: 25–11.266); and a "postscript" offering a "Determination Regarding Engagement in Action (*karmayoga nirṇayaḥ*)" (with two similarly differentiated subsections dealing with the law of *karma* and final liberation: 12.3–116) (2004*b*, xxvii–xxx; cf. 2005*a*, 7–11). Olivelle regards this "exquisite structure" to be even deeper than *Manu*'s organization into twelve chapters

75. As Fitzgerald (2006*b*) points out to me and Olivelle with reference to the *Mbh*'s term *niṣka*.

(*adhyāyas*), which he sees as "artificial divisions" despite their being "old" and "followed by all the commentators" (xxvii). But whether or not the four-part division is older than the twelve chapters, it clearly underlies it, and is, as Olivelle says, compelling evidence that *Manu* is not "an edition or version of a preexisting text, but an original composition written by a single individual. The kind of deep structure, so subtle yet so clear, makes it impossible to have been composed either through unconscious accumulation or through a series of editorial interventions spanning long intervals of time. This was conceived and put together by a single individual with extraordinary ability and a systematic mind" (Olivelle 2004*b*, xxii). Let us recall that Lingat also credits this authorial mind with "lyrical flights" and finds this exquisitely designed text to be one of "literary beauty."[76] Lately, Olivelle also seems to have become attracted to a slight modification that could bring him closer to my views on the joint authorship of the *Mahābhārata*: "If not by an individual, then [*Manu*] must have been composed by a 'strong chairman of a committee' with the help of research assistants who carried out his plan" (Olivelle 2005*a*, 7; cf. 19, 26).

D. Brahmā in *Manu's* Frame Narrative

To make a thorough break from the *kalpasūtras* and from the *dharmasūtras*' link with the Vedic *śākhās*,[77] *Manu*, says Olivelle, "introduced a significant and drastic innovation: unlike the *Dharmasūtras*—which were located within the give and take of an expert tradition, offer glimpses of divergent views within that tradition, and do not pretend to be anything other than humanly authored works—the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* is presented as a treatise handed down by none other

76. Lingat 1973, 98; cf. Doniger 1991, who views *Manu* as "composed in increments over several centuries" (xliv–xlv); "a hotchpotch" (lv). It is not clear from this why she concludes her introduction calling it "this extraordinary text" (lxviii). See chapter 1 § B on this, and her similar view of the *Mahābhārata*. I also do not follow Bronkhorst's attempt (in press) to isolate the often "lyrical" *Manu* 12 as late because, in his view, it is only there that Manu discusses "rebirth as determined by karmic retribution" "to explain the superior status of Brahmins." The "possible exceptions" (Bronkhorst cites *M* 6.61–64,, 69–69,, and 10.42) to this "general rule" rather prove that, as soon as one drops the requirement that the theory would apply only to Brahmins, there is no rule at all.

77. On *Manu*'s frame and the others to be discussed here, see, briefly, chapter 1 § B. The frame story "suggests" such a break, even though the matter may be more complicated. As Olivelle indicates,"[i]t is evident that the author of Manu conceived of his *śāstra* as a charter applicable to all and transcending the narrow boundaries of vedic *śākhās*," and that Kumarila "clearly articulated" a Mīmāṃsā position "[t]hat Manu is not limited to any *śākhā*" (2005*b*, 272, 261 n. 2). Yet Jamison makes a case that *Manu* turns an adage from earlier ritual texts ("don't wake a sleeping fire") into a law for *snātakas* ("don't wake a superior") from within the Maitrāyaṇīya *śākhā* of the Yajurveda (2000, 121–24), challenging Lingat's view that *Manu* is "fully detached" from a prior *gṛhyasūtra* tradition and that the evidence is lacking for Bühler's notion of a prior *Mānava Dharmasūtra*. Cf. Bronkhorst 1985*b*, also arguing for a prior Mānava *dharma* text from the Mānava school of the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā*; Biardeau 2002, 1: 66, also viewing such a link as apparently broken (semble rompu).

than the creator god Svayaṃbhū. He taught it to his son Manu, who transmitted it to his disciples, including Bhṛgu, who is made the spokesman and promulgator within the treatise."[78] *Manu* leaves traces of its real author's "pandit mentality."[79] But in presenting its author "as the primeval lawgiver, the Creator himself," it leaves no room for "debate, discussion, or scholarly give and take" (2004*b*, xxv). Olivelle says the frame "fizzles out" at the end (2004*b*, xxv), and presents a "disjunction" between the notion of the Creator Brahmā as the single source of Law in chapter 1 and *Manu*'s discussion of four different sources of Law in chapter 2 (xxvii). But the Creator's divine authority is established from the beginning, for the whole. *Manu*'s author is both a modest poet and a most immodest "traditional pandit." We can now see what is involved, at least for *Manu*, in doing without an intertextual citational apparatus.

Now in having a direct line to Brahmā, Manu has interesting company in the persons of the Buddha, Vālmīki, and Vyāsa. The Buddha, as we have seen, not only tells Brahmins from time to time how to join the company of Brahma; Brahmā appears soon after the Buddha's enlightenment to prompt his first sermon by reassuring him that, although his enlightenment is indeed profound, "There will be those who will understand" (see chapter 4 § B.1.b). At the beginning of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Brahmā gives Vālmīki the insight to see all that has happened and is still yet to happen in Rāma's life, and promises that Vālmīki's poem will endure so long as the rivers and mountains last on earth and that it will all be true (1.2.22–36).[80] Vyāsa also converses with Brahmā—though only belatedly—in a famous double interpolation. First, in an insertion probably from before the fourth-century CE, Brahmā appears to Vyāsa to vouch that his epic is a work of poetry (*kāvya*); then, in twenty lines inserted probably several centuries later, Brahmā recommends that Vyāsa call upon the elephant-headed god Gaṇeśa to be his scribe.[81]

The case of the Buddha suggests that Brahmā's authorization would have to do with an implied endorsement of the Buddhist *dharma* by the god of Vedic and Brahmanical orthodoxy. And the two epics show that, beginning with the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Brahmā authorizes and validates poetry. Putting these two points together we have a suggestive combination for understanding Brahmā's role in *Manu*. For Manu,

78. Olivelle 2005*b*, 272. Cf. Lingat 1973, 74: The *dharmasūtras* "profess to be nothing more than treatises written by ordinary mortals and based on traditions of the sages," but they are also, where deemed appropriate, intent on differentiating their customs from those of the ancients.

79. See Olivelle 2005*a*, 29, citing, as seeming slippages, Manu's (really Brahmā's) occasional references to others' opinions and appeals to other sagely and divine authorities; cf. 311, n. to 8.110 concerning the author's lapse in citing Manu's son Vasiṣṭha's oath as an "historical episode"; Olivelle 2004*b*, xxvii.

80. Although the *Rāmāyaṇa* is called the *ādikāvya* or "first poem," the term does not occur in the Baroda Critical Edition. But it probably should since it occurs in a universally attested *sarga* where, after Sītā has vanished into the earth, Brahmā encourages Rāma to hear the rest of this *ādikāvya* (7, Appendix I, no. 13, lines 31–39).

81. See Lüders 1929, 1144; Sullivan 1990*a*, 11, 118–19; Hiltebeitel 2008*a*, 206–9; Adluri 2010*b*.

Brahmā authorizes poetry as the god who has come to embody Veda or the Vedas, and more specifically the utterances of Vedic poetry or *mantra*, including the primal utterances (*vyāhṛtis*) by which Brahmā creates the triple world.[82] What *Manu* adds here is that, even more than authorizing poetry, Brahmā actually composes it and imparts it to Manu who is now his son: their relation being a fitting one for a text on law, and particularly on laws of inheritance, for which Manu has been an authority since the Vedic Mantra Period.[83] Thus while Brahmā prompts Manu to transmit *dharma* in the form of Brahmā's own poetry,[84] he also prompts Vālmīki to compose poetry that will be about a paragon of *dharma*, just as he comes to endorse Vyāsa's poetry about *dharma* in the *Mahābhārata*.[85]

These correspondences allow us to call attention to some other similarities in the frames themselves. All three texts frontload their frames to initial chapters, and although *Manu* could be said to allow its frame to fizzle out a bit more than either of the epics does, there are reminders of it both near the middle (5.1–4) and in the last *adhyāya*, both at its beginning (12.1–2) and its end (12.117–26)—reminders that, as with those in the epics, leave it to the attentive reader or listener to grasp how the frame remains relevant and threaded into the text, or can even be expanded upon at major points. In each work, the frame stories tell of the poem's composition and transmission and explain its ultimate outreach to a "universal" audience. The *Mahābhārata* has three frame narratives, each of which focuses on the transmission of the story to audiences that are increasingly remote from the main action, ultimately taking us to the outer frame location of a celestial Naimiṣa Forest where we overhear the celestial Ṛṣis listening to the *Mahābhārata* for the first time.[86] The *Rāmāyaṇa* creates just the opposite effect. Instead of reaching universality

82. As Bühler points out, commentators also relate the figure of Manu back to four passages mentioning "Vedic Mantras which Manu is said to have revealed or seen" ([1886] 1969, xvi; cf. lx).

83. At least since *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* 2.3.2, which quotes *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 2.1.9.4, "Manu divided his estate among his sons," the *dharma* tradition has established Manu's credentials as a lawgiver first of all in the area of inheritance as a matter of *śruti* or Veda; see Hopkins 1882, 240–41; Bühler [1886] 1969, lxi. From Bühler's survey of Vedic mythemes surrounding Manu (lvii–lxii), others such as "father of mankind" and "inventor of sacrificial rites," including especially funeral sacrifices, could lend some support to the prominence of inheritance in *Manu*'s pre-legal-tradition profile. Cf. Olivelle 2005*a*, 18, citing *Taitt. Saṃh.* 2.2.10.2 for "what appears to have been a proverbial saying: 'Whatever Manu has said is medicine.'"

84. Olivelle takes up these matters in relation to divine instruction in the Upaniṣads, and the likely influence of Buddhism in presenting "the words of a single charismatic individual . . . as the sole fountain of authority in a religious tradition" (2004*b*, xxv–xxvi).

85. On Vyāsa's affinities with Brahmā, see Sullivan 1990*a*. On Brahmā and the Vedas, see Hiltebeitel 2005*b*, 2005*c*; on the *Rāmāyaṇa* inspiration for the *Mahābhārata* interpolation about Vyāsa and Brahmā, see Shulman 2001, 33 n. 10.

86. On the Mahābhārata's three frames and the otherworldliness of the Naimiṣa Forest in its outer frame, see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 92–161; 2006*a*. On comparison of the two epics' frame stories, see Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 461–64.

through increasing remoteness from the epic's events, it conjures up a sense of great immediacy in just one frame by having the poem addressed directly to Rāma, the hero and universal "perfect man." Moreover, once Sītā has entered the earth, Rāma and other earthly listeners are joined, with Brahmā's permission, by the celestial Ṛṣis who, in this case, come to an earthly Naimiṣa Forest to hear the rest of the story (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 285–86, 317–22; 2005*a*, 501–2). Meanwhile, *Manu* is transmitted from Brahmā to Manu to Manu's disciples, including Bhṛgu, whom we overhear recounting it to the gathered celestial Ṛṣis.[87] Vālmīki as poet (see Goldman 1976), Śaunaka as chief listener, and Bhṛgu himself as chief transmitter are all Bhārgavas. In each case, the poets themselves are present to hear their work first recited: Vālmīki to hear it recited by Rāma's twin sons and to vouch with finality for Sītā's chastity even as she descends forever into the earth; Vyāsa to hear it recited to Janamejaya even though he is the latter's ancestor by six generations; and Manu apparently remains seated to listen to his son Bhṛgu address the assembled Ṛṣis (*M* 1.1, 60, 119).

Moreover, if we follow *Manu*'s frame through its midpoint and final iterations, we do find that it tides itself along through an important theme. In the frame's first resurgence, at a major subsection transition, the Ṛṣis, having heard Bhṛgu describe "the Laws of a bath-graduate" (*dharmān snātakasya*) (5.1), chime in with a brief question:

> "How, O Lord, does Death (Mṛtyu) prevail over Brahmins, who know the vedic teachings (*vedaśāstravidām*) and practice their *svadharma* described in this manner?" Bhṛgu, the embodiment of the Law (*dharmātmā*) and the son of Manu, said to those great seers: "Listen to the fault because of which Death seeks to kill Brahmins. Death seeks to kill Brahmins because of the failure to recite the Vedas, the dereliction of the rules of proper conduct, laziness, and faults with respect to food. . . ." (5.2–4)[88]

The Ṛṣis' question about the *svadharma* of Brahmins seems to follow up on what is said shortly before this, near the end of chapter 4, where *dharma* alone, without the prefixed *sva-*, has been mentioned as the "merit" one should accumulate to be one's "escort" or companion (*sahāya*) to the other world:

87. See also *M* 7.28–39, about the boomerang powers of the personified *daṇḍa*, Punishment, that the king should administer only properly, mentioning a midspace cosmological Muni setting that could remind Bhṛgu and his Ṛṣi/Muni audience of their own setting: "Punishment . . . oppresses the fort, the realm, and the mobile and immobile world, as well as the sages and gods dwelling in mid-space (*antarikṣagatāṃś caiva munīn devāṃś ca pīḍayet*)." Olivelle does not consider this passage to be among his "excurses"; see further Biardeau 2002, 1: 85.

88. Cf. Olivelle trans., 2005*a*, 138. I thank Greg Bailey for suggestions on this verse.

> Gradually and without hurting any creature, he should pile up merit (*dharma*) like termites an anthill, so as to secure an escort in the next world; for in the next world, neither father nor mother stands by him as his escort; nor does son, wife, or relative. Only merit stands by him (*dharmas tiṣṭhati kevalaḥ*).[89] Alone a creature is born, and alone it dies. Alone it enjoys the fruits of its good deeds, alone the fruits of its evil deeds. While his relatives discard the dead body on earth as if it were a piece of wood or a clod of earth, and depart with averted faces, his merit accompanies him (*dharmas tam anugacchati*). To secure an escort, therefore, let him gradually pile up merit every day; for with merit as his escort, he will cross over the darkness that is difficult to cross. It quickly leads that man, who is devoted to the Law and whose sins have been erased by ascetic toil, to the next world, glittering with an ethereal body. (4.238–43, Olivelle 2005*a*, 136 slightly modified)

Note that Olivelle translates *dharma* in two ways here: as "merit," where the metaphor of "piling up" more or less requires it, up to the point that "Law" better describes what a man is devoted to who has secured his escort of merits that leads him to the other world. *Manu* is thus returning to these themes, and to its frame story, when the Ṛṣis ask to learn from Bhṛgu about the contrary situation where Brahmins practice their "own *dharma*" yet succumb to death because they have a countervailing "fault" or "faults" (*doṣas*). Here it seems that the *dharma* in the Brahmin's *svadharma* has shaded over into the meaning "merit."

Manu reiterates this set of themes at several more points, each carefully nuanced for those in different walks of life, before we meet it one last time at the end with the final closing-out of the frame. For the wandering ascetic in the fourth *āśrama* or "life-stage," "self" supersedes "merits" as his only "escort" or "companion":

> Taking delight in what pertains to the self, he should remain seated without longings or sensual attachments. With himself[90] as his only companion (*sahāya*), he should walk about here, seeking felicity. (6.49)

For the king, however:

> Justice (*dharma*) is the only friend (*suhṛd*) who follows a man in death; for all else perishes along with the body. (8.17)

89. Cf. Doniger's misleading rendering: one is unhurtful to other creatures so that they will be one's "companions" in the other world, where "religion alone endures" and "follows after him" (1991, 96).

90. Or "the self" (*ātmaiva*).

Note that for a king, the "friend" or "wellwisher" (*suhṛd*)[91] replaces the "escort," and *dharma* is now a matter of "justice," which the context clearly warrants since it is a question of the "*dharma* bull" that the king's justice can either impede or uphold (8.16–19). Then, as part of a surprising speech that Manu puts into the mouth of a judge exhorting truth from witnesses of all four classes, the judge should say:

> Whatever good deeds you have done since birth, dear man, all that will go to the dogs, if you testify dishonestly. "I am all alone"—should you think like that about yourself, good man; there dwells always in your heart this sage (*muni*), who observes your good and evil deeds. This god, Yama the son of Vivasvat, dwells in your heart. If you have no quarrel with him, then you do not have to go to the Ganges or the Kuru land. (8.90–91)

Here, with Manu bringing together a concatenation of ideas similar to what one finds in Naciketas' dialogue with Yama in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*,[92] it is now the Muni Yama as the inner witness in the heart who replaces the inner escort[93] and its other surrogates. It continues to say that "if the witness has no quarrel with Yama, the god of death and the judge of the dead, then there is no need for him to visit the Ganges or the land of the Kurus to expiate his sin" (Olivelle 2005*a*, 310, paraphrasing 8.92). Actually, it only says he need not visit "the Kurus" (*kurūn*), which may hold some interest in terms of ideas of "Kuru orthopraxy" that would seem to have taken hold in both Buddhist (see chapter 4 § B) and Brahmanical circles. The *Mahābhārata* gives some strikingly similar ideas about the inner witness to the heroes' dynastic ancestress Śakuntalā when she demands that King Duṣyanta attest honestly in his royal court, which will become the court of the Kurus,[94] as to his paternity of their son Bharata (*Mbh* 1.68.25–32).

91. See chapter 12 § D on friendship terms. Before this, *suhṛd* is used only at 7.32, with respect to the king: "Within the realm, he should act in accordance with the rules; upon his enemies, he should impose harsh punishments; toward his *suhṛds* and loved ones, he should behave without guile; and to Brahmins he should show compassion." After 8.17, it is still an affair of the king at 8.335 and 9.294 (the *suhṛd* as "ally" is one of the seven "constituents" (*prakṛtis*) of the realm). Only later at 11.57 and 89 is it used in other contexts.

92. See chapter 3 § F: Naciketas asks Death (Yama, Mṛtyu) for the "subtle *dharma*" on life after death, and learns about the mystery of the "primeval one" hidden in the impenetrable depth of "cave of the heart."

93. Note that just before this at 8.86, along with Yama, Dharma is among the cosmic beings and gods who knows a witness's truth; as does the self, a kind of conscience (8.84)—the inner self as witness. Yet this rebirth cosmology still recalls the Vedic fetters of Varuṇa. Cf. 8.173: "Like Yama, therefore, the king should lay aside his own likes and dislikes and follow Yama's pattern of behavior, suppressing anger and mastering his organs"; 9.307: as Yama holds both friend and foe alike in his grip, he holds his subjects in his grip through his "Yama-vow."

94. See Brodbeck 2009*a*, 133–50; Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*d*. During Duṣyanta's reign, it is still yet to become the "Kuru" capital because Kuru is a later eponym in the Paurava-Bhārata-Kuru/Kaurava dynastic line.

Finally, speaking through Bhṛgu, Manu seems to tie all these themes together in a quasi-Upaniṣadic closing-out of the frame and the entire text.[95] First, we are brought back to the frame:

> In this manner, the blessed god, desiring to do what is beneficial for the people,[96] revealed to me in its entirety this highest secret of the Law (*dharmasya paramaṃ guhyam*). With a collected mind, a man should see in the self everything, both the existent and the non-existent; for when he sees everything in the self, he will not turn his mind to what is contrary to the Law. All the deities are simply the self, the whole world abides within the self; for the self gives rise to engagement in action (*karmayoga*)[97] on the part of these embodied beings. (12.117–19)

Then, after Manu recommends a closing meditational exercise that involves depositing the five elements in aspects of one's own person and various gods in the mental and physical organs that orient action (120–22),[98] he brings the text to closure on ways of grasping the supreme Puruṣa, by any one of which a man many attain the highest—among them, what I would like to call the "subtle inner Manu":

> The ruler of all, more minute than even an atom, resplendent like gold, and to be grasped by the sleeping mind—he should know him as the supreme Puruṣa. Some call him Agni, some Manu the Prajāpati, others Indra, still others Breath, and yet others the eternal Brahman. This one, pervading all beings by means of the five forms, makes them go around like a wheel through birth, growth, and death. When a man thus sees by the self all beings as the self, he becomes equal towards all and reaches Brahman, the highest state. When a twice-born recites this Treatise of Manu proclaimed by Bhṛgu, he will always follow the proper conduct and obtain whatever he desires. (123–26, slightly modifying Olivelle 2005*a*, 236)

It turns out that Manu's frame fizzles out quite lyrically by construing Manu himself and his Treatise (*śāstra*) as possibilities for giving definition to one's inner escort, inner Muni, inner author, inner text, and inner witness. Manu pitches his poetry to get *dharma* under one's skin.

95. Olivelle, I think quite unnecessarily (if he means by it "interpolation"), regards this as an "excursus" (2005*a*, 236). But see chapter 1 § B on my view of such excurses.

96. Or, "for the welfare of the worlds" (*lokānāṃ hitakāmyayā*; 12.117b).

97. I return to this passage in chapter 11 § C on *Manu*'s different view of *karmayoga* from that in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

98. It clearly involves the action orientation of a Brahmin householder, building up to "Viṣṇu in his stride, Hari [or Hara] in his strength, Fire in his speech, Mitra in his organ of evacuation, and Prajāpati in his organ of procreation" (12.121).

E. *Varṇa* (Caste), *Āśrama* (Life Pattern), the King, Śūdras, and Women

If one sought to inculcate a body of behavioral norms, roles, and rules that should govern each person's social life in all its transactions across the spectrum of social classes and likewise each person's individual life through all its options, and further have it calibrated to cover not only individuals in every social class but every "intermediary" or "mixed" class, one would come up with something like the theory of *varṇāśramadharma*, "the Law of caste (*varṇa*) and life-stage (*āśrama*)," as it is usually translated, which textbooks on Hinduism are prone to attribute to *Manu*. Since the social classes (*varṇa* also means "category" and "color"), class mixture (*varṇasaṃkara*), and the life-stages each have their own calculus, which becomes virtually infinite when the three are interrelated, we must continue to treat facets of them in other sections of this chapter and book. This section will open on a few limiting points, and then explore how *Manu* makes the laws of *varṇa* and *āśrama* so focal in relation to our other classical *dharma* texts.

Regarding the four classes and the mixed classes, *Manu* and the *Mahābhārata* are adamant on one limiting point: there is no fifth *varṇa*. None of the *dharmasūtras* make such a point. The *Mahābhārata* has the line "Tradition allows four classes, a fifth is not met (*smṛtā varṇāś ca catvāraḥ pañcamo nādhigamyate*)" (13.47.18), which comes amid discussion of the different amounts to be inherited by sons of a Brahmin born from wives of the four classes. Sons born from wives of the three twice-born classes inherit amounts that decline according to the wife's rank, even though all three types of sons would have the Brahmin's status; but the son of a Śūdra wife does not have Brahmin status and should receive a small inheritance only optionally, and only out of "non-cruelty," "compassion," or "kindness" (*ānṛśaṃsya*; 20).[99] Obviously, a Brahmin's inheritance is protected against claims made by sons of uncategorized wives. This discussion of inheritance sets the stage for one of mixed classes in the next *adhyāya* (13.48), in which there are some similarities to verses at the beginning of *Manu* 10.[100] It is there that Manu takes his stand that there is "no fifth" while introducing mixed classes as the opening topic of his tenth chapter on "Rules for Times of Adversity" (Olivelle 2005*a*, 205):

99. I note several translations of this value in anticipation of discussing it further below and in chapter 9 as a major value in the *Mahābhārata*, particularly for the Pāṇḍava king Yudhiṣṭhira, who is in fact being addressed at this point by his "grandfather" Bhīṣma.

100. Dandekar 1996, 1075 notes several of these.

> Devoted to their respective activities (*svakarmasthā*), the three twice-born classes should study the Veda;[101] but it is the Brahmin who should teach them, not the other two—that is the firm principle. The Brahmin must know the means of livelihood (*vṛttyupāyān*) of all according to rule, and he should teach them to others and follow them himself. Because of his distinctive qualities, the eminence of his origin, his holding (*dhāraṇāt*) of restrictive practices, and the distinctive nature of his sacrament (*saṃskārasya*), the Brahmin is the lord of all the classes. Three classes—Brahmin, Kṣatriya, and Vaiśya—are twice-born; the fourth, Śūdra, has a single birth. There is no fifth. (*M* 10.1–4; Olivelle trans. 2005*a*, 208, slightly modified)

Presumably, such an insistence follows from an ongoing reading of the *Puruṣasūkta*, which mentions only four primal classes, and may be a way of disallowing claims to the contrary found in some Buddhist texts such as the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*.[102] But more directly, it reinforces the explanatory power of the theory of mixed castes, which explains the origins of all "subcastes" (*jātis*,[103] literally "births")—including even Greeks (Yavanas) and outcastes—as the post-cosmogonic outcome of the different possibilities of *varṇa* miscegenation.[104] Note also that the opening verse concerns *svakarma* rather than *svadharma*: the former, as we shall see in chapter 11, is the greater of the two concerns as regards mixed classes. As *Manu* works out the calculus of mixed classes to new and advanced degrees, it is also interesting that even while he focuses his geographical attention only on the northern plains,[105] he mentions "subcastes" that extend to the north and south, mentioning as fallen "Vrātya" Kṣatriyas, for instance, two of the "oligarchic" tribes or *gaṇa-saṅgha* "republics" of Videha known to the Buddha[106]—the Licchivis and Mallas—along with the southern Draviḍas, all in one verse (10.22). As Olivelle points out, the prior mention of Yavanas in such a context by *Gautama* probably helps to date the "mixed caste"

101. The verb *adhīyīran* ("they should study," "they should recite") implies the Veda, but it is only presumably what the Brahmins should teach—*dharma* being another possibility, as the passage would suggest, or better, they should teach Veda implying also *dharma*. Presuming that it refers to teaching Veda, Bühler notes that *M* 2.241–42 allows that in times of adversity "a Brâhmaṇa may learn the Veda from a non-Brâhmaṇical teacher, and that hence this rule is not absolute" ([1886] 1969, 401–2). See also 8.390–91, discussed below, which seems to allow that a king can "teach" (Olivelle 2005*a*, 188), "establish," or "settle" (*pratipādayet*) the *svadharma* of those in *āśramas* (whether "hermitages" or "life stages").

102. See chapter 4 § A. I am told that some *Jātakas* also mention a fifth caste.

103. Although as Biardeau 2002, 1: 93 observes, "the term *jāti* makes only a discrete appearance" at *M* 10.26, 27.

104. Cf. *Mbh* 12.285.5–7 differentiating the four *varṇas* born from Prajāpati from all others born from miscegenation.

105. See above n. 34. What makes for the "conduct of the good" in Brahmāvarta is that it is "handed down from generation to generation among the social classes and intermediate classes of that land" (*M* 2.18).

106. See Bühler [1886] 1969, 406, n. to verse 22. On *gaṇa-saṅghas* see chapter 4 § C.2.

theory, and also to date *Gautama* relative to *Āpastamba*, since *Āpastamba* "does not deal with mixed classes at all, a topic found in all the other *Dharmasūtras* and the later Smṛtis" (1999, xxxi; cf. Jha 1970). As Biardeau puts it, "on the plane of the imaginary is constructed the complex tissue of a vast society in mutation" (2002, 1: 93). Her example behind this statement is *Manu*'s treatment of the *sairandhra*, "skilled at adorning and personal attendance" (10.32), as a mixed caste—fabricated, she suggests, as an explanation for Draupadī's disguise as a Sairandhrī or hairdresser in the fourth book of the *Mahābhārata*.

As to the *āśramas*, the main limiting matters were well underscored in a groundbreaking study by Olivelle (1993). In brief, the *Mahābhārata* knows the *āśramas* in two ways. It knows them in their "original system" (153–55) familiar to the *dharmasūtras*, where they begin very much in flux even by name and sequence,[107] and under some disapproval,[108] as four different lifelong choices (*vikalpa*) to be made before marriage.[109] And it knows them in their "classical system" (148–51) favored (though not exclusively) by *Manu* (129), which staggers the four through a male's life. Where the *Mahābhārata* advocates the classical system, however, it does not do so in quite the same way as *Manu*. On *Manu*'s usage, Olivelle offers an important note to *Manu* 1.114ab, a line in *Manu*'s table of contents or "synopsis." This line reads: *strīdharmayogaṃ tāpasyaṃ mokṣaṃ saṃnyāsameva ca*; and Olivelle translates it as follows, while inserting the chapter-and-verse numbers where *Manu* addresses these topics:

> Law pertaining to women [5.111–45]. Hermit's life [6.1–32]. Renunciation* [6.33–85]. Retirement* [6.87–96]. (Olivelle 2005*a*, 92, 401)

The asterisks after "Renuciation" and "Retirement" direct us to a footnote:

> *Renuciation* (mokṣa), *Retirement* (saṃnyāsa): the Sanskrit term *mokṣa* literally means liberation. Manu, however, attaches a technical

107. *Āpastamba* treats what is to become the fourth stage (*Manu*'s *vedasaṃnyāsin* or "vedic retiree" [*M* 8.86]) before what is to become the third, calling the two *pravrāja*, "wanderer" (2.21.7) and *vānaprastha*, the eventually conventional name for "forest-dweller" (2.21.18), in that order; *G* calls the eventual fourth *bhikṣu*, possibly reminded of Buddhism, and likewise discusses him before *vaikhānasa*, "anchorite," his name for the eventual third (3.2, 11–35). *B* (2.11.14–26) and *V* (9.1, 10.1) both use *vānaprastha* and *parivrājaka* in that order. Cf. Biardeau 2002, 1: 70–71, 74, 81, 91–93 on the *āśramas* in *Gautama*, *Baudhāyana*, *Āpastamba*, and *Manu* respectively.

108. See *Ā* 2.23.3–24.14 presenting his view of non-Vedic claims to supernatural powers; *G* 3.3, 3.36; *B* 2.11.27, favoring only the householder (see Olivelle 1999, 374 nn. and 1993, 83–91 on "this early view of conservative Brahmans"); *B* 2.11.28, attributing to some the idea that the *āśrama* divisions were created by the demon (Asura) Kapila, son of Prahlāda. On these and other references, see Olivelle 1993, 90–99. On Kapila's "Greater Magadha" associations, see Bronkhorst 2007, 61–68.

109. *V* 7.3–5 upholds such choice only on condition that one has completed the student stage (*brahmacarya*) and its Veda study without breaking his vow of chastity, while ruling that a student should serve his teacher until death.

> meaning to the term, using it as a synonym of renunciation and the fourth order of life dedicated exclusively to the search after personal liberation. . . . Manu makes a clear distinction between this renunciatory asceticism and the life of a vedic retiree, which he designates as saṃnyāsa. (Olivelle 2005*a*, 243)

In an earlier article, Olivelle already touches on *Manu* 1.114's differentiation of *mokṣa* as "renunciation"[110] from *saṃnyāsa*, or more specifically "the life-style of the *vedasaṃnyāsika* that *Manu* calls *saṃnyāsa*," which, at 6.86–96 involves the abandonment of ritual activity incumbent on a householder (1981 270–71). Olivelle also shows that in contrast to *Manu*'s carving out of this technical "vedic retiree" usage to insist on doing the four *āśramas* in sequence, the *Mahābhārata* is one of just a few texts to introduce what Olivelle calls "the classical meaning" of *saṃnyāsa*, in which "*saṃnyāsin* is commonly used as a synonym of such terms as *parivrājaka*, *pravrajita*, *śramaṇa*, *bhikṣu*, and *yati*" (265), and in which it is devalued at least for active warriors and kings in both the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Śāntiparvan* (268, 272).

I believe Olivelle raises intriguing possibilities in positioning the *Mahābhārata* among the earliest texts to have innovated in introducing the generalized classical usage of *saṃnyāsa*. But what is ignored in his earlier discussion is that the *Mahābhārata* also airs the preclassical system, particularly doing so in its story of Vyāsa's firstborn son Śuka, which Olivelle, eleven years later, calls "the most straightforward presentation of the original [i.e., preclassical *āśrama*] system" (1993, 154; cf. 104, 153–55). This is because the Śuka story confirms that the 25-year-old (*Mbh* 12.309.62b) Śuka can skip the full sequence of the four *āśramas* and seek *mokṣa* directly from the first *āśrama*, that is, from *brahmacarya*, without marrying, and above all, without waiting for the fourth *āśrama*. If the Śuka story presents the preclassical system in conjunction with questions pro and con about the classical system, this does not encourage the view that the *Mahābhārata*'s innovative treatment of the classical system would itself, in isolation, be late, as Olivelle, at least as of 1982, proposes.[111] More likely, I believe, it just takes a while for the more strictly legal texts to catch up with the *Mahābhārata*. I think that in airing both systems, the *Mahābhārata* keeps them under debate such as Olivelle himself mentions (1993, 69–70), taking them up in some harmony with their treatment in the *dharmasūtras* and

110. Bronkhorst 2010*b* and in press raises questions as to whether Olivelle's construal of *mokṣa* in this fashion befits *Manu*. I believe it does, and also befits what the *Mahābhārata* has to say about *mokṣa* in the closing units of the *Mokṣadharma Parvan*. I will discuss this matter in chapter 13.

111. Olivelle dates the *Mahābhārata* here later than the *Rāmāyaṇa* (1982, 267–68, 272 n. 47, 273), and, on the "classical meaning" as found "especially the *Śāntiparvan* and the *Anugītā*, concludes, "We would not be far wrong in placing this final semantic development of S[aṃnyāsa] around the 3rd–4th century A.D." (274).

probably soon before *Manu* further codifies them. Unlike the *dharmasūtras* and the *Mahābhārata*, *Manu* seeks energetically to suppress the pro-choice position (131–36, 147, 176).

Whatever their views of the other *āśramas* and the total system, however, all of these texts, including the *Rāmāyaṇa* even in its only verse that clearly references the *āśramas*,[112] agree,[113] or at least suggest,[114] that the householder life is the best, mentioning such reasons for this as its being the only one prescribed in the Vedas, that it supports them all, and that it alone enables socially responsible human reproduction. As we saw at the end of chapter 4, the Buddha is portrayed as countering such a view of the householder's primacy in the *Aggañña Sutta*.

Coming now to the crediting of *varṇāśramadharma* to *Manu*, the *Manu Smṛti* never actually mentions the term itself, nor, for that matter, does its first main successor, the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*. As far as these texts are concerned, the term seems to have emerged among commentators on them,[115] who classify *varṇāśramadharma* as one of the five or six topics that such Smṛtis cover in their treatment of *dharma*: (*a*) *varṇadharma* ("injunctions based on *varṇa* alone"—i.e., on class or caste), (*b*) *āśramadharma* (injunctions concerned directly with life-stage behaviors), (*c*) *varṇāśramadharma* (rules concerned with their points of intersection), (*d*) *guṇadharma* (virtues or duties incident to personal qualities "such as protection of subjects in the case of a crowned king"), (*e*) *nimittadharma* (secondary or occasional duties "such as expiation on doing what is forbidden"), and (*f*) *sādhāraṇadharma* (virtues "common to all humanity viz., *ahiṃsā* [non-violence] and other virtues").[116] Such a list of extracted topics is instructive for its commentarial indication that, prior to the joint consideration of *varṇāśramadharma* as topic three, *varṇa*- and *āśrama-dharma* are recognized as each having separate status on their own.

P. V. Kane says, "It will be noticed from the above that all matters (except *sādhāraṇa* or *sāmānya dharma*) have *varṇa* and āśrama as the pivots round which

112. *Rām* 2.98.58, in which Bharata uses the adage among his arguments to try to convince his exiled brother Rāma to return home and rule. Olivelle, who first called attention to the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s near silence on the subject (1993, 18 n. 46; 103), suggests the verse would be an interpolation, but his pre-fifth-century BCE date for the *Rāmāyaṇa* is too early a rationale for this.

113. *G* 3.3, 36; *B* 2.11.27; *V* 8.14–16; *Mbh* 12.12.11; 18.27–28; 23.4–5; and 61.15, in which four different people make this point to Yudhiṣṭhira early in his postwar miasma; *M* 6.87–90; *Rām* 2.98.58 as just noted.

114. *Āpastamba* says only that, based on the Veda, rites requiring the wife are superior to what can be achieved by yogic powers achieved in other *āśramas* (2.23.10), and that "immortality consists in offspring" (24.1).

115. See Kane 1962–75, 1: 2–3 and Vidyarnava and Panshikar 2003, 3–4), from which I take the following list. According to Kane, Hemādri mentions all six, citing sixteen verses from the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* on them, and Medhātithi mentions the first five. Vidyarnava translates Vijñāneśvara's *Mitākṣarā*, which includes all six in commenting on *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 1.1. Another early usage occurs in inscriptions, where even Buddhist kings are called "protectors of *varṇāśramadharma*" in sixth-century inscriptions (Olivelle 1993, 201–4).

116. The parenthesized quotations are from Kane 1962–75, 1: 2–3.

the whole of dharmaśāstra revolves. It is therefore that in ancient smṛtis like those of Manu (1.2 and 107) and Yājñavalkya (1.1) the sages are represented as asking the great expounders of these codes to impart to them instruction in the dharmas of *varṇas* and *āśramas*" (1962–75, 1: 3). Yet Kane fudges here. Even *sādhāraṇa* or *sāmānya dharmas* are found to revolve around caste and life-stage. In the *Mahābhārata*, which seems to have originated the concept of *sādhāraṇa dharmas*, they are mentioned twice in the *Mokṣadharma* section of the *Śāntiparvan* as "Upaniṣadic" virtues linked with the fourth life-stage (12.236.15ab; 262.27cd). And another *Mokṣadharmaparvan* unit says they are common to the upper three *varṇas* and to Śūdras who follow the "conduct of the good" (12.285.22c–34). Asked by King Janaka to contrast the *dharmas* distinctive to each caste (*viśeṣadharmas*) and the *sāmānya dharmas* applicable to all castes, the sage Parāśara lists an odd assortment of thirteen *sādhāraṇa* ones[117] in the following order: noncruelty (*ānṛśaṃsya*), nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*), vigilance, sharing, doing ancestral rites, hospitality, truth, non-anger, contentment with one's own wives (*sic*), purity, constant unspitefulness, self-knowledge, and forbearance (23–24).

Kane is also a bit casual in stating that *Manu* and *Yājñavalkya* begin with the sages asking for "instruction in the dharmas of *varṇas* and *āśramas*." It is true that *Yājñavalkya* 1.1—in the text's only verse mentioning *varṇa* and *āśrama* together[118]—has the sages ask Yājñavalkya, "Tell us completely the Dharmas of classes (*varṇas*), of orders (*āśramas*) and of others."[119] But in the two verses that Kane cites from *Manu*, the sages ask only about the classes, first (as in *Yājñavalkya*) along with the mixed classes:

> Please, Lord, tell us precisely and in the proper order the Laws (*dharmān*) of all the social classes (*sarvavarṇānām*) as well as those born in between (*antaraprabhavānām*). (1.2)
>
> In this, the Law (*dharma*) has been set forth in full—the good and the bad qualities of actions and the timeless norms of social conduct—for all four social classes. (1.107)

Unlike the Ṛṣis at the beginning of *Yājñavalkya*, *Manu*'s Ṛṣis are yet to fuse the *āśramas* into their text-opening preoccupation with straight and mixed classes (cf. Olivelle 1993, 135). How *Manu* gets to mentioning *varṇa* and *āśrama* together might thus be revealing.

117. Both terms are used for *dharma* or *dharmas* common to all or "held in common."

118. As determined from the electronic version prepared by Tokunaga 1991.

119. "Others," according to the *Mitākṣarā* commentary, refers to mixed classes; Vidyarnava and Panshikar 2003, 3.

Manu mentions *varṇa* and *āśrama* jointly only twice, but both times resonantly: the first with some buildup and the second with global finality. This second usage comes in *Manu*'s last chapter in a verse claiming Vedic validity for both schemes in an all-encompassing vast cosmological setting:

> The four social classes (*varṇas*), the three worlds, and the four orders of life (*āśramas*), the past, the present, and the future—all are individually established by the Veda.[120]

Noticeably absent are the mixed classes. One wonders if this could be a knowing acknowledgment of their absence in the *Puruṣasūkta*, which could account for everything in this verse except the four *āśramas*, whose Vedic status is highly dubious.[121]

For our purposes, however, the verse where *Manu* first joins *varṇa* and *āśrama* is even more revealing. As we have just seen, *varṇa* is a topic from *Manu*'s very beginning, and remains so virtually throughout. But *āśrama* emerges only intermittently until it is taken up as the main topic of chapter 6—the only chapter in which *varṇa* is *not* mentioned. Their first joint mention comes only after this, early in chapter 7, amid the launching of "the Laws pertaining to kings" (7.1; *rājadharmān*), to which, as Olivelle has put it, *Manu* will devote three "innovative" chapters (7–9):

> The king was created (*sṛṣṭaḥ*) as the protector (*abhirakṣitā*) of people belonging to all social classes and orders of life (*varṇānām āśramānāṃ ca*) who, according to their rank,[122] are devoted to the Law specific to them (*sve sve dharme niviṣṭānām*). (*M* 7.35)

Clearly, Manu introduces the joint topic of "caste and life-stage" as belonging to his expanded coverage of the king; and note that with the verse's emphatically doubled *sve sve dharme*, with which it actually begins, we have a strong indication that the notion of *svadharma* is "henceforth" meant to be complicated by consideration—indeed, calibration—of the countless ways that *varṇa* and *āśrama* would intersect *in a kingdom*.[123] Moreover, as Olivelle notices, with its use of *sṛṣṭaḥ* referring back to the king's having been created (*asṛjat*) by Brahmā (*prabhu*) at 7.3,

120. *M* 12.97. See Olivelle 2005a, 349, noting that some commentators take *prasidhyati vedāt* to mean "known from the Veda."

121. See Olivelle 1996 (= 2005*b*, 53–74) showing that exegetical reliance on *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 2.23.1 to anchor the *āśrama* system in a Vedic text is not convincing.

122. *Anupūrvaśaḥ*, which Olivelle normally translates with "order" rather than "rank"—perhaps in this case avoiding the double use of "order," which appears in his translation of *āśrama*. "Rank" would initially seem more suitable for *varṇa* than *āśrama*, but insofar as *varṇa* subsumes *āśrama*, "rank" is a useful rendering here.

123. Curiously, *Manu*'s other two usages of *sve sve*, both likewise conveying virtually infinite multiplicity amid social complexity, are with *karmaṇi*, that is, *karma*, "activity": 8.42, on how men should act far away from home, and 9.262, on how criminal activities should be publicized and punished.

"this verse concludes the section on the creation of the king to be the protector of the people" (2005*a*, 294), for the next verse marks the transition to a new topic, a day in the life of the king that we will discuss in section G of this chapter.

Our current *adhyāya* 7 thus begins with a celebrated passage on the creation of the king by "extracting eternal particles (*mātrā nirhṛtya śāśvāvatīḥ*)" from eight deities associated with the cardinal and intermediate directions, while in his grace (*prasāda*)[124] and anger (*krodha*) the king is also respectively Padma, the Lotus goddess of prosperity, and Mṛtyu, Death (7.3–12). The passage has often brought up the question of whether *Manu* holds the king to be divine, which *Manu* admits to in a qualified way: "it is a great deity [*devatā*] who stands here in human form" (10cd). Biardeau suggests good caution before reading too much into this passage: "scholars who have wanted to see in this creation of the king from eight divinities an expression of the idea that the king himself is divine have certainly gone too far. The king is certainly not a god, but one wishes to render him respectable to all. If there are men who are gods on earth, it is the Brahmins, and they are so only in a metaphoric sense."[125]

It is following this creation of the king that Manu builds up to his first joint mention of *varṇa* and *āśrama* by entailing both of them in a most intense passage about the birth also of Daṇḍa, Punishment personified. Daṇḍa is "created" or "issued" (*asṛjat*) just like the king, and possibly before (*pūrvam*) him, which would make him the king's older brother:

> For his [the king's] sake (*tasyārthe*), the Lord (Īśvara) formerly created (*asṛjat pūrvam*) Punishment, his son—the Law and protector of all beings—made from the energy (*tejas*) of Brahman.[126] It is the fear of him that makes all beings, both the mobile and the immobile, accede to being used and they do not deviate from the Laws proper to them (*svadharmān na calanti ca*).[127] The king should administer him appropriately on men who behave improperly, after examining truthfully the place and the time, as well as their strength and

124. Olivelle 2005*a*, 154 prefers a more Confucian "benevolence." *Prasāda*, translated by Pollock as "grace" (*Rām* 3.3.21), occurs in an episode that Pollock describes under the heading of "the liberating power of the king" (1991, 50–51, 92).

125. Biardeau 2002, 1: 86, citing Kane 1962–75, 3: 23 ff. as regards the metaphoric divinity of Brahmins. Cf. Pollock 1991, 42–54, 63–67, 71–74; 1986, 21–24, reading "Rāma's divinity" against a background that would seem to include this passage from *Manu* (see Pollock 1991, 64–65; 300 n. to *Rām* 3.38.12), which, like others he cites, does not mention Viṣṇu among the deities contributing to the king's makeup. On the basis of such passages, Pollock suggests, I think unconvincingly (see Hiltebeitel 2003, 124–28), that Rāma's association with the "avatāra theology" would have occurred only gradually (52).

126. Or "of Brahmā" (*brahmatejomayam*). The "issuing" (√*sṛj*) mode of creation is Brahmā's, for whom the name Īśvara is nothing uncommon.

127. *M* 7.15; On this "deviation" (√*cal*), cf. *Gautama Dharmasūtra* 11.9–11. See Olivelle 2005*a*, 293 on *bhogāya kalpante* in this verse, which could also mean "being enjoyed" and "being eaten." The theme is extended in the same terms to the whole universe at 7.22–23, elided in this citation.

learning (*śaktiṃ ca vidyām*). Punishment is the king; he is the male (*sa rājā puruṣo daṇḍaḥ*);[128] he is the leader (*netā*); he is the ruler (*śāsitā*); tradition tells us, he stands as the surety for the Law with respect to the four orders of life [the four *āśramas*]. Punishment disciplines all the subjects. Punishment alone protects them, and Punishment watches over them as they sleep—Punishment is the Law, the wise declare. When he is wielded (*dhṛ*, or held) properly after careful examination, he gives delight to all the subjects; but when he is administered without careful examination, he wreaks total havoc. If the king fails to administer Punishment tirelessly on those who ought to be punished, the stronger would grill the weak like fish on a spit (*śūle*); crows would devour the sacrificial cakes; dogs would lap up the sacrificial offerings; no one would have any right of ownership (*svāṃyam*); and everything would turn topsy-turvy (*adharottaram*). . . . All the social classes [the four *varṇas*] would become corrupted, all the boundaries[129] would be breached; there would be revolt (*prakopa*) of all the people as a result of blunders committed with respect to Punishment. Wherever Punishment, dark-hued and red-eyed (*śyāmo lohitākṣo*), prowls about as the slayer of evil-doers, there the subjects do not go astray—so long as the administrator[130] ascertains correctly. The proper administrator of Punishment, they say, is a king who speaks the truth, acts after careful examination, is wise, and has a masterly grasp of Law, Wealth, and Pleasure.[131] . . . For Punishment is immense energy, and it cannot be wielded (*dhṛ*) by those with uncultivated selves (*akṛtātmabhiḥ*). It assuredly slays a king who deviates from the Law, along with his relatives; then he [Punishment] oppresses (*pīḍayet*) the fort, the realm, and the mobile and immobile world, as well as the sages and gods dwelling in mid-space. (7.14–21, 24–26, 28–29, slightly modifying Olivelle trans. 2005*a*, 154–55)

Two points to begin with. The verse about dark-hued red-eyed Punishment prowling about (7.25) is identical in all but one word to a passage in the *Mahābhārata* (12.15.11), where it is spoken to fortify the clemently inclined King Yudhiṣṭhira by his harsher younger brother Arjuna. And mid-space

128. Bühler's parentheses are useful here: "Punishment is (in reality) the king (and) the male" ([1886] 1969, 219). Cf. Biardeau 2002, 1: 89: "the king is no longer king: the true king is his *daṇḍa*."

129. *Setavaḥ*; alternately, "bridges," "dams."

130. Although there is no pronoun, Olivelle 2005*a*, 155 has "its administrator," noting (294) that *netṛ* must refer here to the king as Daṇḍa's administrator, and that it was translated as "leader" for Daṇḍa himself at 7.17.

131. The three "aims of life" or *trivarga* (translated by Olivlle as the "triple set"; see § G for discussion), by which the Punishment-wielding king is said to flourish in the next verse.

(the *antarikṣa*) would be where the celestial Ṛṣis or Munis have gathered as an interested party to listen to Bhṛgu recite this text, which, in this passage, also gets us quickly to the Ṛṣis' earthly counterparts, the Brahmins, who are another interested party. For two verses further along, one learns that the Punishment-wielding king should "have good assistants" (*susahāyena*, 7.31)—that is, above all Brahmins. As preamble to the day in the life of the king, *Manu* thus creates high drama for its audiences, for whom the destructive boomerang effects of Punishment extend from here below—beginning with the fort (*durga*) that a king should create as the capital of his kingdom—on up to the gods and Ṛṣis.

As Olivelle observes (2005*a*, 294), by mentioning "the place and the time" and urging "careful examination," this passage also sets the stage for the king to link Punishment "here below" with the administration of judicial inquiry in court, which will be among the matters that *Manu* most richly develops as follow-up on his king's day.[132] Moreover, we now see that, as prelude to the verse in which *varṇa* and *āśrama* are mentioned together, *Manu* would have Punishment correct two problem areas in seemingly different ways, or at least with what appear to be different motivations. First, those who deviate from the four *āśramas* are to be punished after determining their power and learning. I take this to imply *nāstikas* and, again, above all Buddhists, who would have mendicant practices that fall outside the *āśramas* and lack the right Vedic learning, but who also just might have some royal backing. Second, irrespective of learning but with power hanging in the balance, those who breach the boundaries of the four *varṇas* from below should be punished lest they give rise to revolution. As Olivelle brings out regarding verse 7.21, "commentators take *adharottaram* to mean that the lower castes would usurp the roles and privileges of upper castes"; and as he says of 7.24, "I take the term *prakopa* here to mean revolt or tumult among the populace, a meaning common in the *Arthaśāstra*" (2005*a*, 294).

Manu thus dramatically reduces the opening that one finds in *Āpastamba* and the *Mahābhārata* to learn *dharma* from Śūdras, which, as we have seen, both texts mention alongside learning *dharma* from women. The "mixed" union of the male Śūdra and the Brahmin woman being *Manu*'s worst-case scenario

132. Both topics receive attention in connection with the king's judicial responsibilities: *varṇa* at 8.172–75, where it concerns the king's impartiality to all classes; and *āśrama* at 8.390–91, concerning the limits of the king's intercessory powers when dealing with disputes among "twice-born men living in *āśramas*." Olivelle translates *āśrameṣu* here as "in hermitages," but I think "life-stages" is more likely. As Olivelle notes (2005*a*, 322), "The context clearly calls for extraordinary individuals," and some commentators explain, and both Bühler and Doniger translate it, with reference to disputes about life-stage duties. There are also *Mahābhārata* instances, to be mentioned, that would seem to intend both meanings, and that is possible here in *Manu* as well.

(*M* 10.30), it is probably no coincidence that women and Śūdras are the two main targets of *Manu*'s recommendations for spectacular punishments in public view:

> When a woman, arrogant because of the eminence of her relatives and her own feminine qualities (*strīguṇa*), becomes unfaithful to her husband, the king should have her devoured by dogs in a public square frequented by many. (*M* 8.371)
>
> If a man of lower class deliberately torments Brahmins, the king should kill him using graphic modes of execution that strike terror into men (*citrair vadhopāyair udvejanakarair*). (*M* 9.248)

The situations are not exactly parallel. In the first case regarding women, *Manu* is only improving on what *Gautama* has to say:

> If a woman has sex with a low-caste man, the king should have her devoured by dogs and have the man executed, or punish [him?] in the manner stated above.[133] (*G* 23.14–16)

Manu also improves on the punishment of "the male offender," who should be "burnt upon a heated iron bed" on a stack of logs in the same public square (*M* 8.372). In the *dharmaśāstra*, tradition public spectacles for adultery seem to have preceded those recommended for the execution of criminals to instill public terror. For the latter, *Manu* has gone beyond the *dharmasūtras* to adopt the terminology of the *Arthaśāstra*.[134] Also, whereas the first type of public punishment could be local to any offense, the second is called for "in prisons along the royal highway where people will see the criminals, grieving and mutilated" (*M* 9.288). But there are convergences in the way *Manu* and the *dharmasūtrakāras* treat women and Śūdras. They are mentioned as overlapping conceptual categories.[135] Both were indispensable to the *varṇa* system for the "obedience" they should each "like to hear" about and ungrudgingly perform

133. That is, the Śūdra who has sex with an Ārya woman: "his penis should be cut off and his property confiscated" before he is executed (*G* 12.2–3).

134. On *Manu*'s use of *KA* terms to prescribe "colorful" (*citra*), "clean" (*śuddha*: probably beheading, "not found in any other Dharma text"), and "painful" (*kleśa*) executions, see Olivelle 2005*a*, 333 n. to 9.279; 334 n. to 9.291. See *M* 9.288, 9.291–92 (a dishonest goldsmith, "the most wicked of all thorns" who is to be "cut to pieces with razor knives," would probably be a Śūdra).

135. For example, as defining levels of suitable punishment (*Ā* 1.9.24.5: "As with killing Śūdras, so with killing women") or exemption from it (*G* 22.16–17: a non-fertile woman and a Śūdra are equally protected from murder, and neither as well as a cow or frog). Cf. *B* 1.10.19.3: "What applies to Śūdras applies to women and cows, except when it is a Brahmin woman soon after her menstrual period." Cf. *M* 11.67: killing a woman or Śūdra are among "secondary sins causing loss of caste."

as *dharma* for Ārya men.[136] But neither can hear the Veda or have the initiated status of upper class identity. Moreover, their mingling defines the menace of *varṇasaṃkara* (see *G* 12.1–7). They are flashpoints of trouble.

In the same vein, where *Manu* speaks of Punishment protecting the weak in the context of the right of ownership, it is once again clear that the weak to be protected are primarily Brahmins, whom *Manu* (like all our classical Brahmanical *dharma* texts) systematically protects from all but the mildest punishments. Indeed, where *Manu* and also the *Mahābhārata*[137] say "the stronger would grill the weak like fish on a spit (*śūle*)," it is a likely play on the *matsyanyāya*, "the maxim of the fish," according to which a lawless kingdom is one in which the big fish eat the little fish, implying the impalement[138] of weak Brahmins should a wrong "stronger" party come to power. *Manu*, however, is unparalleled by the *dharmasūtras* or the epics[139] in the way it, quite surprisingly, puts revolution so openly in the air; and we are indebted to Olivelle for making us aware that suppressing it is an important part of the politics of this text. Indeed, as I have hinted, *Manu*'s Daṇḍa personified, watching us red-eyed even in our sleep, is something like George Orwell's Big Brother[140]—a point that might bear further thought as regards epics in which the two royal heroes, Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira, who most represent *dharma*, and in Yudhiṣṭhira's case incarnates it, are precisely elder big brothers of a more humanly appealing type whose word is nonetheless law—even and indeed especially when it is harsh in its outcome.

Yet suppressing revolution aside, *Manu*'s author does have precedent in one *dharmasūtra* and a close parallel in the *Mahābhārata* for the way he brings *varṇa* and *āśrama* together as a unified topic once he has introduced *rājadharma*, "the Law of the King" and the "rod of punishment" (*daṇḍa*) with it.[141] *Gautama*,

136. As with Śūdras' obedience (*suśrūṣa*) to the higher classes, *strīdharma* requires that a wife "should obey (*śuśrūṣeta*)" her husband "when he is alive and not be unfaithful to him when he is dead . . . a woman will be exalted in heaven by the mere fact that she has obediently served (*śuśrūṣate*) her husband" (*M* 5.151, 155). *Mbh* 3.196–206 has twenty-two such usages for the "faithful wife" and the good Śūdra in the *Pativratā-Upākhyāna*. *Śuśrūṣa*, "liking to hear, obedience, service," is often the stand-alone virtue for Śūdras; cf. *Ā* 1.1.7; *G* 28.39; *M* 1.91, 9.334–35, 10.99; *Mbh* 3.149.36, 5.70.47, 12.60.28–34, 13.128.56. Cf. *BhG* 18.44cd, where Kṛṣṇa speaks of *paricaryā*, "service," instead as the "inherent karma of the Śūdra" (*ātmakaṃ karma śūdrasyāpi svabhāvajam*).

137. The second line of *M* 7.20, cited above, is identical with the second line of *Mbh* 12.67.16, with the latter's first line being about what happens should there be *no* king to bear the *daṇḍa*.

138. *Śūla*, if single-pronged, implies an impalement stake—a meaning relevant to Śiva's *triśūla* or "trident."

139. As the Marxist scholar Walter Ruben (1968, III.116–17) makes clear, although "there was no revolutionary class in ancient India" and although most of the "despots" known from texts (including the epics) are "mythological," leaving the people to be "consoled with religious stories," some Buddhist Jātakas envisioned mass resistance. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 177.

140. See the use of spies and secret agents in "the eradication of thorns" at *M* 9.261.

141. There may also be such precedent in the *Arthaśāstra*: "And after conquering the world, he [the king] should enjoy it divided into *varṇas* and *āśramas* in accordance with his own duty (*svadharmeṇa*)" (13.4.62).

as the only *dharmasūtra* to mention the two terms together, does so twice (11.9–11, 11.29) when it gets to the topic of the king in conjunction with an unpersonified *daṇḍa* (11.27–32), and a third time in an overarching summary (19.1) that evidently goes back to those two passages. This will not surprise us, since Olivelle has demonstrated *Manu*'s use of *Gautama* as a source and model. Indeed, the first of these rules in *Gautama* has similarities to *Manu* 7.35, by which, as we have seen, Manu first brings *varṇa* and *āśrama* together:

> He [the king] should watch over (*abhirakṣet*) the social classes and the orders of life in conformity with their rules (*varṇān āśramāṃś ca nyāyato*), and those who stray (*calatas*) he should guide back to their respective duties (*svadharme sthāpayet*), "for the king," it is stated, "takes a share of their merits (*dharma*)." (*G* 11.9–11)

The king's role in both passages is to watch over or protect (using forms of *abhi* + √*rakṣ*) the *varṇas* and the *āśramas* in the area of his subjects' *svadharma*, which *Manu*, as we have seen, intensifies by *sve sve*.[142] Meanwhile, the *Mahābhārata* mentions *varṇa* and *āśrama* together eleven times,[143] the first four occurring in what could be called a cluster in the *Rājadharma* section of the *Śāntiparvan* (Book 12) very near the beginning of Bhīṣma's postwar instruction of Yudhiṣṭhira, where they also coincide with Bhīṣma's introduction of the *daṇḍa* (12.59–74).[144] Let it suffice to describe this cluster using the rubrics by which Fitzgerald (2004*a*, 292) summarizes the segments in which they appear. The first three occur in a sequence (12.60–66) on "Permitted and Prohibited Occupations and Life-Patterns and the King's Responsibility to Enforce These"; and the fourth comes in the next *adhyāya* or chapter (12.67) which treats "The Nature and Character of Kingship." "Life-pattern" (rather than "life-stage") is Fitzgerald's thoughtful translation of *āśrama*, and "permitted occupations" are of course defined by *varṇa*. It is important that *Gautama* and the *Mahābhārata* are, along with *Manu*, our only classical *dharma* texts to make these correlations: *Gautama* for its affinity with *Manu* just mentioned, and the *Mahābhārata*, particularly in its aftermath to the war, for the suggestive verbal, conceptual, and, as we shall see in the next section, *narrative* affinities that it alone has with *Manu*.

142. Cf. also *M* 7.15 with √*cal*, "to deviate, wander."

143. At 12.63.11ab, 12.64.24cd, 12.66.37ab, 12.67.1ab, 12.92.7ab, 12.230.014ab, 12.261.44ab, 12.308.177ab, 12.308.180ab, 13.027.0341, and 14.35.27ab.

144. "The Origin of the Daṇḍa" (12.121) comes later, with Daṇḍa again personified as dark (*śyāma*) but with many eyes and such additional features as four tusks, eight feet . . . (121.14–16).

F. *Rājadharma*: Establishing a King's *Dharma*

We thus come to the area where, at least with regard to the legal tradition blazed by the *dharmasūtras*, both *Manu* and the *Mahābhārata* innovate markedly. *Manu* does so mainly in terms of subject matter or content: attention to "the king, statecraft, and especially judicial procedure" (Olivelle 2004*b*, xix). Olivelle is certainly right to emphasize *Manu*'s advances on these interrelated fronts, and that, on statecraft and judicial procedure, *Manu* shows familiarity with the *Arthaśāstra* tradition (2005*b*, 275–85). Statecraft as *artha* and *daṇḍanīti* (counsel on coercive authority) is the subject of an independent and probably prior *śāstric* "science" on its own (see Sinha 1991, 369 n. 3), which *Manu* and the epics treat as if *dharma* encompassed that science.[145] As regards judicial procedure, *Manu* works out a well-ordered presentation of eighteen "grounds for litigation" (often translated "titles of law") that seems to be his improvement on a different ordering of sixteen grounds in the *Arthaśāstra* (Olivelle 2005*a*, 13–16). With these eighteen grounds, *Manu* goes into an area untouched by the epics. Yet one might leave open the possibility that *Manu* gets to the eighteenth ground with the *Mahābhārata* in view. Why now eighteen grounds rather than sixteen? Not only is eighteen the *Mahābhārata*'s signature number;[146] as Olivelle observes, *Manu* makes "gambling and betting" his eighteenth ground and treats it differently from the other seventeen, for which he presents rules to establish proper legal procedure. Moreover, unlike *Āpastamba*, which presents "rules for the orderly conduct" of gambling itself, *Manu* considers it a practice that "should be suppressed rather than regulated" and takes it up along with theft under the heading of "the eradication of thorns" (*kaṇṭakaśodhana*)—a category that in other *dharma* (and also *artha*) texts "falls outside the grounds for litigation" (15). The negative way *Manu* sets off gambling as the eighteenth ground is curious. *Manu* says, "In a former age gambling was seen to create great enmity (*dyūtam etat purā kalpe dṛṣṭaṃ vairakaraṃ mahat*); therefore, an intelligent man should never engage in gambling even for fun" (*M* 9.227; Olivelle trans. 2005*a*, 202). As Olivelle indicates, this could refer to the gambling losses of Nala and/or Yudhiṣṭhira—in either case, something from the *Mahābhārata* (2005*a*, 332). But surely, since Nala actually reconciles with his dicing opponent and no war results, it is Yudhiṣṭhira's gambling that would be known for creating "great enmity."

145. *Dharma* is the encompassing member of the *trivarga* that includes *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*. See *M* 2.13, 2.224 (and Olivelle 2005*a*, 253 on Manu's six usages of *trivarga*), and 12.38, a brief ascending correlation of the *trivarga* with the three *guṇas* or "qualities" of matter: *kāma* with *tamas* (darkness, torpor), *artha* with *rajas* (vigor, energy), and *dharma* with *sattva* (goodness, luminosity). The epics frequently give these "three goals" personal advocates, with *dharma* generally trumping.

146. Cf., however, Biardeau 2002, 1: 91: "One does not find oneself surprised to find the 'affaires courants' divided into eighteen categories; the number reappears."

What then becomes of interest is that *Manu* says this occurred "in former *kalpa*," not a former *yuga*, or "between *yugas*," as one might expect from the *Mahābhārata*. Noting for the moment that "eon" would have been a useful differential translation of *kalpa*, leaving "age" for *yuga*, I will return to this curiosity in chapter 6.

As to the *Mahābhārata* itself, Braj Sinha offers an important discussion of the epic's treatment of *Arthaśāstra* and *daṇḍanīti* in Bhīṣma's instructions to Yudhiṣṭhira on *rājadharma*, which applies equally if not more so to Bhīṣma's ongoing treatment of *āpaddharma*, both in the epic's *Śāntiparvan*. According to Sinha, Bhīṣma bridges the "chasm" (1991, 369) between the *Arthaśāstra* tradition of "putting the interests of the King and State above all other interests" (376) and "the *dharma* categories of the *Dharmasūtras*" (370) by "resorting to the universal principle of *dharma* as the foundation of the *Mahābhārata* notion of *rājadharma*" (383). Moreover, Bhīṣma does this in parallel with, and with "echoes" of, the Buddhist "conception of a righteous king and the sociopolitical and cosmic significance of such a righteous king" (375), and of Buddhist usage of the term *dharmarāja* in the *Nikāyas* and *Jātakas* (376–83). As will be clear shortly in this section, however, Sinha's treatment of the *dharmasūtras* as already "concerned with the art of government in a monarchical State" (474) seems to read *Manu*, which he does not discuss, back into that tradition.

The "*Mahābhārata* question" thus raises questions of *Manu*, and vice versa. With such questions in mind, I will focus on two features of *Manu*'s main chapter 7 on the king: the construction of a fortified capital, and, in the next section, *Manu*'s narrative of a king's day.

After having first mentioned the royal fort (*durga*) in a passage already noted, where the boomerang effect of unused Punishment redounds from the fort and the kingdom up to the gods and sages on high (7.29), *Manu* speaks of starting up a royal fort in the following terms:

> He should settle (*āvaset*) in a region that is dry (*jāṅgalam . . . deśam*), abounding in grain (*sasyasaṃpannam*), populated mainly by Āryas, healthy, beautiful (*ramyam*), with submissive neighbors, and providing a comfortable living. A fort secured by a desert, a fort with an earthen rampart, a fort surrounded by water, a fort protected by a forest, a fort guarded by soldiers, and a fort protected by a hill (*giridurgam*)—finding safety in a fort, he should settle in a fort. He should try his very best to find safety in a hill fort; for the hill fort, because of its numerous superior features, is the most excellent of them. Animals, creatures living in holes, and fish find safety in the first three of them; and monkeys, humans, and gods (*plavaṃgamanarāmarāḥ*) in the last three respectively (*kramaśaḥ*).

> As their enemies do not harm these when they have found safety in a fort, so his foes do not harm a king who has found safety in a fort. . . . It should be well supplied with weapons, money, grain, conveyances, Brahmins, artisans, machines (*yantrair*), fodder, and water. At its center he should have a house built (*kārayed gṛham*) for himself, a house that is spacious, secure (*guptam*), suitable for all seasons, and provided with pools and groves. (7.69–73, 75–76; Olivelle trans. 2005*a*, 157–58, slightly modified)

Let us note that we are already in a little narrative. Only "after" securing a fort (which he could presumably conquer as well as build) and made a house for himself "should" this start-up king marry and appoint a chaplain (*purohita*) and other trusted Brahmin officials (7.77–81). Between this minor narrative and the more foregrounded one that starts him on the morning of his ideal day (beginning at 7.145 and running through nightfall and the rest of chapter 7), one hears at some length how the king should conduct matters of war and conquest (7.87–109) and see to the protection of his subjects (110–44).

In this segment on war and domestic policy that comes between these two narratives, *Manu* projects a fairly grand monarch, as indeed it does elsewhere: not least in the divine infusions that go into the original king's creation, but also in the claim that the king is or makes the *yuga* or "age" (9.301–2), and in a verse saying, "A king, though a mere child, must never be treated with disrespect, thinking he is just a human being" (*M* 7.8), which hints at monarchy on a potentially dynastic scale.[147] But in this first minor narrative on starting up a kingdom, *Manu* stays within the "little king" idiom typical of the *dharmasūtras*, where the Brahmin authors envision close access to the king as if it were open to more than just themselves.[148] It is, however, especially *Āpastamba* who affects this image,[149]

147. See von Stietencron 1997, 497–98: "a passage which points to hereditary kingship." I would not, however, follow von Stietencron in continuing ". . . at the time of its composition," as if one could date the passage differently from others in *Manu* on this basis of this implication. This type of historicizing is not to be trusted, particularly now after Olivelle has shown *Manu* to be a largely unitary text.

148. *G* 10.36 may signal a small kingdom: one should report something found to the king; similarly *V* 15.6: when one adopts a son, inform the king. Cf. *G* 20.1: "A man should disown a father who assassinates a king." *Vasiṣṭha*, however, supplies royal succession rules, including a stipulation that royal widows may become ascetics (19.29–34), which sounds possibly epical. Meanwhile based on what little *Baudhāyana* offers on the king, Biardeau writes, "the Brahmins of the Baudhāyana school" could not know "a great king. . . . Or possibly these Brahmins were just more preoccupied with their personal duties" (2002, 1: 73–74).

149. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 79–80: noting that the *sūtra* style may make economy, "one cannot help but be struck by the brevity of the description, a brevity that no doubt corresponds to the rusticity of the place. . . . As to the palace, it is no doubt a simple residence." See *Ā* 2.26.2–3: the king who dies attempting to secure wealth stolen from Brahmins is no different from other heroes (*anye śūrāḥ*) whose "own body serves as the sacrificial post (*ātmāyūpa*) and an unlimited amount is given as the sacrificial fee." The explanation would befit some village "hero stones."

and moreover offers *Manu*'s only *dharmasūtra* precedent in speaking not only about starting up a fort but about a fort (*puram*) at all,[150] which he describes with a rather precise and surprising (see Biardeau 2002, 1: 79–80) ground plan.

> He should have a residence and a fort constructed (*māpayet*), with their gates facing south. The residence (*veśman*) is within the fort, and in front of the residence is the lodge (*āvasatha*), which is known as the Audience Hall (*āmantraṇam*). To the south of the fort is the assembly hall (*sabhā*) with doors on both the south and the north sides so that one can see what goes on within and without.[151] In every one of these buildings fires should be burning continuously, and every day offerings should be made in these fires in the same manner as in the domestic ritual. The king should put into the lodge at least those guests who are vedic scholars. They should be given accommodation, as well as beds, food, and drink, in accordance with their distinction (*yathāguṇam*).[152] The king should not live more opulently than his elders and ministers (*gurūn amātyāṃś ca*). And in the realm no one should suffer from hunger, illness, cold, or heat, either through want or by design. In the middle of the assembly hall he should erect a gambling table, sprinkle it with water and place there dice—they should be in pairs, of Vibhītaka seeds, and in adequate numbers. Āryas who are upright and honest may gamble there. (*Ā* 2.25.2–13)

As Biardeau observes, both *Āpastamba* and the *Mahābhārata* would have a common rapport here with the *śrautasūtras*' precedent-setting descriptions of "the *sabhā* and its *sabhya* fire . . . tied to the ceremony of the solemn consecration of the king, the *rājasūya*," in which the *sabhya* fire is lit on that occasion for the Rājasūya-ending dice match that the king must win (2002, 1: 80). Attentive to the way the *Mahābhārata* plays these matters out in its dice match sequel to the Rājasūya, which King Yudhiṣṭhira loses rather than wins, Biardeau finds the rapprochement "evidently troubling":

150. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 79: "This capital is probably a fort, if one keeps to the meaning of Vedic *pur*." *Ā* would seem to echo this Vedic usage also when at 1.22.7 it speaks in Upaniṣadic terms of the self as "the fort (*puram*) beyond compare." *G* has nothing about a fort, only a *sabhā* (11.17); *B* mentions "the bolt of a city gate" (2.6.13) using *puram* apparently as "city," as it also does jointly with *nagara* ("city") at 2.6.33; *V* uses *puram* in the compound *antaḥpura*, "harem," which as "inner fortress" implies the "fort" meaning of *puram*. *M*'s word *durga* is not used for "fort" in the *dharmasūtras*.

151. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 80: "one notes here the absence of any surrounding wall. There is no fortification, even if the royal ville would be a protected place. Perhaps the site offers more protection than the complexities of the construction. Let us note the doors that permit seeing arrivals (enemies) from all sides."

152. Or "according to their merits, qualities"; note the use of *guṇa*, which comes to be interchangeable in some contexts with *dharma* in the sense of "merits, virtues," to distinguish rank among Vedic scholars or Śrotriyas.

> It is not possible to say which text borrows from the other, since both rely on the same episodes in the solemn ritual (notably of the Taittirīya school). It is rather the appearance here, in this *dharmasūtra*, of a major epic theme that poses a question: one that is not directly soluble, but which can translate preoccupations that are "in the air," which would have to do with the king of the Brahmanical society. (Biardeau 2002, 1: 180)

I think, however, that Biardeau's closing explanation suffices without the need to consider the possibility that the *Mahābhārata* would borrow from *Āpastamba*, much less the reverse.

As to *Manu*, whatever precedent *Āpastamba* offers within the legal tradition for starting up a fort, *Manu* takes it minimally. *Āpastamba* makes it explicit that the start-up king is to have the fort "constructed," and not only a fort but a capital complex. On the other hand, *Āpastamba* gives no hint at any different types of forts, such as *Manu* enumerates, that the new king might choose from. As we shall see, this enumeration seems to serve new purposes in *Manu*.[153] What interests *Āpastamba* is a ground plan that zeroes in on the gambling hall, and considering *Manu*'s antigambling legislation, it is not surprising that *Manu* mentions no such multiple constructions and settles for now on building (*kṛ*) just the one royal residence with the seemingly indifferent and utterly generic term "house" (*gṛha*).

But *Manu* may know of another precedent for founding a new capital. That is what the Pāṇḍavas do, shortly before Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya and the disastrous dice game that follows, when they found their new kingdom at Indraprastha after burning the Khāṇḍava Forest. As befits *Manu*'s prescription, they select a dry region or savannah (*jāṅgala*): to be precise, land that is within Kurujāṅgala, a name for the whole Kuru domain, which according to an earlier passage was rich in grain (*sasya*) and delightful and salubrious in the time of the heroes' parents (*Mbh* 1.102.1–14) in ways similar to the type of spot that *Manu* recommends for a new capital.[154] All this is not to say that *Manu* draws on the *Mahābhārata* or vice versa, though, as I have indicated, I think it is the former. Why would *Manu*'s king, who has no particular location for his capital, be urged to deploy soldiers "from the lands of the Kurus, Matsyas, Pañcālas, and Śūrasenas" on his

153. As Biardeau already suggests with regard to the inclusion of the forested fourth type among the best, "What are the monkeys doing here, if the epic is not at the bottom of the tableau, at least the *Mahābhārata* which knows already the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and gives Arjuna the monkey Hanumān as his emblem?" (2002, 1: 90).

154. By the time the Pāṇḍavas build their fort there, it would not, of course, have "submissive neighbors," since their Kaurava cousins and enemies will now occupy the other "half" of the kingdom. The Pāṇḍavas have their ceremonial hall (*sabhā*) constructed there by the Asura Maya, whose name—the Constructor—derives from √*mā*, just as *Āpastamba* uses the optative of that verb in prescribing how the king "should construct" (*māpayet*) the fort.

front lines when he goes to battle (7.193)? One cannot rule out that the peoples of this Ārya heartland had already become a target for military recruitment.[155] But even if it did, the recommendation could still recall that their lands provided the chief participants in the *Mahābhārata* war. We can, in any case, say confidently that *Manu* knows the epic's idioms in ways that are not derived from a common sacrificial nexus such as one catches "in the air" in the epic's and *Āpastamba*'s shared references to the solemn Vedic ritual.

G. A Day in a King's Life

Manu's recommendation of the hill fort as the best of the six varieties is not surprising tactically. But it is intriguing that *Manu* draws on a poetic convention of the *Mahābhārata* to explain its choice. It comes out early at the beginning of his narrative of a day in the life of the king. The king should rise in the morning, perform his personal purifications with a collected mind, make the fire offering, pay respects to Brahmins, and enter "the splendid assembly hall" (*sabhā*)—there by now or perhaps there all along, and somewhere near his "house"—to greet the public and then dismiss them; then he should confer privately with his counselors (7.145–46). In order to do this,

> Climbing up to the back of a hill (*giripṛṣṭham*), or terrace (*prasādaṃ vā*), retiring to a solitary spot (*rahogataḥ*), or withdrawing to a wild area or a bare tract, he should confer with them unobserved (*avibhāvitaḥ*). (7.147; Olivelle 2005*a*, 162 slightly modified)

Here, I am in agreement with Bühler and Doniger's "the back of a hill" rather than Olivelle's "Climbing up to a hilltop. . . ." The point is to avoid a place where the king can be easily seen. Although *pṛṣṭha* as the "back" of an animal can refer to its "top"[156] or spinal "ridge," it would not mean "top of the mountain" here where the intention is to manage concealment. The king's concealment is an important matter that has already been conveyed near the end of the segment on warfare in two memorable epigrammatic verses (*M* 7.105–6) that are all but identical with two verses found in the *Āpaddharma* section of the *Mahābhārata*'s *Śāntiparvan* (*Mbh* 12.138.24–25):

> He must not let the enemy discover any weakness of his, but discover any weakness of the enemy; he should hide his limbs like a tortoise

155. See Kolff 1990, 59–64, 160, 171–79; Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, 299–310; and chapter 7 on these peoples taking part in a second-century BCE "Northern Midlands Alliance."

156. There is a variant *giriśṛṅgam*, the "top" or even "peak" or "horn of a mountain," which only reveals a misunderstanding by the would be corrector. Cf. Sternbach 1972 on this place.

> and conceal his own weak points. He should ponder over (*cintayet*) his affairs like a heron, dart off like a rabbit, snatch like a wolf, and attack like a lion.[157]

The hiddenness of "the back of the mountain" is a poetic convention that can be found in both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[158] *Manu*'s usage confirms this sense of hiddenness and concealment, and that *Manu*'s author is familiar with the *Mahābhārata* poets' conventions.

The "back of the mountain" has also brought us to the early hours of *Manu*'s ideal day in the life of the king. Here, *Manu*'s precedent may be *Gautama*, but *Gautama* applies this theme not to the king but in a few rules for the Snātaka or Bath-Graduate in a lengthy ninth chapter on that figure.

> He [the Snātaka] should not spend the morning, midday, or afternoon fruitlessly, but pursue righteousness, wealth, and pleasure (*kuryāt . . . dharmārthakāmebhyaḥ*) to the best of his ability, but among these he should attend chiefly to righteousness (*dharma*). . . . Morning and evening, however, he should take his meal, revering the food, and never disparaging it. (9.46–47, 59)

Gautama's concern that the Snātaka pursue the triad of *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*, with *dharma* chief among these, is unique in the *dharmasūtras* in bringing forth these three values together, not to mention ranking them. It is, however, typical, at least as regards the combination *dharma* and *artha*, in being addressed to Brahmins.[159] Here we come to some important formulations. In the epics and *Manu*, these three values together come to be called the *trivarga* or "triple-set"; and when *mokṣa* is added as a somewhat disjunctive fourth,[160] the four are called *puruṣārthas*, the four "aims of man" or "goals of human life."[161] In these texts,

157. The only differences arise where Olivelle's Critical Edition of *Manu* reverses the second half of each line on the similes of the rabbit and the lion. See Olivelle 2005*a*, 298 on these and other similar verses. Belvalkar 1966, 2222 also mentions the parallel. For another on the topic of ascetic aversion to the female body, see *M* 6.76–77 and *Mbh* 12.316.42–43 where it is the celibate Nārada's message to Vyāsa's son Śuka (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 292).

158. On shared *Mahābhārata* (and to some degree *Rāmāyaṇa*) poetic conventions, see Hiltebeitel 2004*a*, 220–26, with discussion of the "back of the mountain" and related usages of *pṛṣṭha* in both epics (221–24, especially 223 n. 75), carrying forward from Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 290–317 concerning the literary site of Vyāsa's hermitage.

159. See *Ā* 1.4.23; 24.23; *B* 1.4.1; *V* 7.77 (each on only *dharma* and *artha*); while *V* 1.1 considers *dharma* the highest "goal" (*artha*) of man. *Ā* 2.10.14 is the only *dharmasūtra* passage on both *dharma* and *artha* directed to the king.

160. *Mokṣa* is sometimes called *apavarga* (frequent in the *Mbh*, and especially the *Mokṣadharmaparvan*): the goal that, in dealing with transcendent matters of salvation, is "away from the classification" of the triple-set. But there are different "rhetorics," including a Vedāntic one that treats *dharma* and *mokṣa* together as *śreyas* ("the sovereign good") and *kāma* and *artha* as *preyas* ("what is pleasant") (Malamoud 1982, 37).

161. In *Manu*, the one mention of *puruṣārtha*, significantly broached in connection with good government by the king (7.100), refers to four of them, but without any indication of how *mokṣa* would be pertinent. At 2.224 *Manu* mentions only the three of the "triple-set."

however, the *trivarga* is more typically couched in advice given especially to kings, and also by kings. So it is in *Manu*, after a general introduction of the *trivarga* (2.224)—remember, Manu is legislating as a first king himself:

> When a king administers Punishment properly, he flourishes with respect to the triple-set (*trivarga*). (7.27ab)
>
> At midday or midnight, when he is not tired or worn out, he should reflect (*cintayet*) on these matters either in consultation with his counselors or alone—on Law, Wealth, and Pleasure, and on how they may be acquired all together when they are in mutual opposition. (7.151–52b; see also 7.100)

One may wonder that *Manu* should transfer a theme from the Snātaka to the king. But *Gautama* already brings these two figures quite decisively together:

> He [the Snātaka] should approach the king (*īśvara*) for the sake of livelihood (*yogakṣema*), but not anyone else except gods,[162] elders, and righteous people. He should try to live in a place well supplied with firewood, water, fodder, Kuśa grass, and garland material, served by many roads, inhabited mainly by Āryas, full of energetic people, and ruled by a law-abiding man (*dhārmikād*).[163] (9.63–65)

Gautama brings the Snātaka to such a "righteous" king for the sake of *yogakṣema*, which Olivelle may undertranslate here, and again later, as "livelihood," since *Gautama*'s other usage certainly has something of the feel of the *Ṛgvedic* sense (see chapter 3 § B) of "harnessing" for war (*yoga*) and "peaceful settlement" (*kṣema*) as alternating roles of a king:

> He [the king] should also pay heed to what his astrologers and augurs tell him, for, according to some, welfare (*yogakṣema*) depends also on that. In the fire within the assembly hall (*śālāgnau*), he should perform rites to secure prosperity (*ṛddhi*) in connection with a propitiation (*śānti*), festive day, military expedition, long life, or auspiciousness, as well as rites to stir enmity, to subdue or slay his enemies, or to bring them to their knees. (11.16–17)

162. Olivelle 1999, 376 thinks that this would refer to divine images, suggesting "that a Brahmin in dire straits may go to a temple to obtain assistance from the temple funds." More likely, he would approach the deity in *śrauta* or *gṛhya* rites that he could perform remuneratively for others.

163. As, at some other points, for the augmented form *dhārmika* (Olivelle 1999, 93 has "righteous").

The other three *dharmasūtras* do not use this compound term (although see *Ā* 1.8.3; 2.5.10).

Manu, however, goes beyond any such a practical rationale for bringing the Snātaka and the king together. Making one surprising twist, he treats them both in the same way as role models,[164] indeed as characters whom he addresses by a sort of optative apostrophe using the verbal root √*cint* that allows him to tell the king and the Snātaka—and them alone—not only what they should do but what they should *think*.[165] These would both appear to be largely "new fictions" of *Manu*. As in *Manu*'s chapter 7 on the king, chapter 4 on the Snātaka presents these usages in a cluster and as implying something of a sequence, although with other matters interspersed. At *Manu* 4.92ab, "He [the Snātaka] should wake up at the Brahma hour and should think (*anucintayet*) on *dharma* and *artha*"; at 4.109, where the question of suspending Vedic recitation has come up, the Snātaka is told of untoward settings and circumstances where "he should not even review it in his mind" (*manasā-api na cintayet*); and at 4.258, in the very last verse of instruction to the Snātaka, who has just been told how to retire peacefully and leave everything to his son, such advice is capped off with, "Living alone in a secluded place, he should always reflect (*cintayen nityam*) on what is beneficial to himself; for by reflecting alone, he attains supreme bliss." Here we see the fully rounded and extended picture *Manu* wants to give of the Snātaka, who originally, it seems, is the young Veda scholar between his initiation (*upanayana*) and marriage who has undergone the rite of *samāvartana*, "returning home," that seems to prepare him to be the prototypical host and guest of Ārya society (Heesterman 1978, 439–46). *Manu*'s Snātaka is now not only the young man who has finished his Vedic study at the home of a guru, bathed, and returned to his parental home optimally to marry, but a man who will stay home as the ideal householder until he is ready—still as a Snātaka—to retire. The *Mahābhārata* speaks casually of such types when Draupadī boasts that "Yudhiṣṭhira supported eighty-eight thousand Snātaka householders (*snātakāḥ gṛhamedhinaḥ*) with thirty slave girls each" (3.222.41)! As Olivelle has indicated, in *Manu* it is something of a maladjustment designed to let the Snātaka's lifelong status of "Bath Graduate" serve *Manu*'s classical prescription that the four *āśramas* as life-stages be taken up in sequence and without choice (1993, 137–38).

164. I follow Merton 1957, 303 on "role model" in contrast to "role" as "more restricted in scope, denoting a more limited identification with an individual in only one or a selected few of his roles." Cf. Hiltebeitel 2004*b*, 40. The limited role model features of Manu's Snātaka and king would have to do with the narrowing ways that each, but differently, embodies lifelong purity.

165. A similar usage of *cintayet* is also found eight times in the *Arthaśāstra*, but without implying a daylong narrative: on the topic of counsel, after covering the winning of territory (1.15.1); in rules for the king (19.16 and 21); concerning the superintendant of horses (2.30.3); on secret agents in the disguise of householders, traders, and ascetics (35.2 and 6); and on rules for the city superintendent (36.1 and 4). Like *Manu*, *Kauṭilya* far more frequently uses *vidyāt*, "he should know." As in other matters noted, *Kauṭilya* would be another of *Manu*'s likely models.

As to the king, this device is something we have now already noticed twice among the five times *Manu* uses it for him: the use of the optative third-person singular of √*cint*—"he should think" (*cintayet*)—which, we will recall, the king should do "like a heron" (*M* 7.104); and, once his day is underway and he can find some fresh time for it, either at noon or at midnight, it is something he should continue to do with his counselors or alone, thinking over the complexities of the *trivarga* (151–52).[166] Considering that this instruction governs the free hours of the night, these usages cover all phases of the king's day. Following the discussion of how the king should position himself in the "*maṇḍala* of neighboring kings" (154–59, 207), "He should think constantly (*cintayet sadā*) about the sixfold strategy of forging alliances, waging war, marching into battle, remaining stationary, pursuing a double stratagem, and seeking asylum" (160). In this vein, there is also a single use of a functionally similar verb: "He should probe closely (*vicārayet*) into the current status and the future shape of all his undertakings, as well as the positives and negatives of all his past undertakings" (178). Then in the afternoon, "After his meal, he should relax in his private quarters with his women, and after relaxing, once again turn his attention (*cintayet*) at the proper time to his affairs" (221). It is a daylong round of near-constant vigilance that then extends similarly into the evening and night (223–25), and continues to have implications for the king's administration of justice, where, on the matter of sexual crimes against women (the fifteenth of the grounds for litigation), *Manu*'s final usage of *cintayet* serves to warn him, "There is no greater violation of the Law on earth than killing a Brahmin; therefore a king should not even think (*manasā-api na cintayet*) of killing a Brahmin"—"even if he has committed every sort of crime" (8.380–81). *Manu* would not get this usage from the *dharmasūtras*, which, although they make frequent use of the optative, do so primarily regarding only actions, and in any case not with the root √*cint*.

Now it should be no surprise to find this usage fairly frequently in the *Mahābhārata*, and considering that this epic and *Manu* share so many idioms, it is also no surprise that it is used almost exclusively in passages where instruction is imparted to two kings, Yudhiṣṭhira (twenty-four times) and the Kauravas' father Dhṛtarāṣṭra (who is twice told what "he should think" by his half-brother Vidura [5.33.45, 11.2.17]). The only exceptions occur where Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna how and what "he should think" once in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (6.25; *Mbh* 6.28.25) and three times in the *Anugītā* (14.19.34, 35; 46.40). Sinha's discussion of the *Mahābhārata*'s "metamorphosis" (1991, 382) of the *Arthaśāstra*'s treatment of *daṇḍanīti* is pertinent here:

166. On complexities of the *trivarga* and Puruṣārthas, see Biardeau 1989*a*; Malamoud 1982; Fitzgerald 2004*b*, 672.

> Instead of putting the interests of the King and the State above all other interests, . . . the *Mahābhārata* makes [its] *dharma rāja* subservient to the interests of all. The scope of *rājadharma* is expanded to include virtues far beyond the compass of [the] particularistic *varṇa dharma* of [the] *kṣatriya* of casting away life in battle, protecting the realm, and preventing the intermixture of *varṇa*. *Rājadharma* comprises compassion for all creatures, knowledge of the ways of the world, and relieving the distressed and the oppressed. (376)

We shall follow up this point in chapter 9, noting that it has bearing on both epics in their portrayals of Yudhiṣṭhira and Rāma. For the present, it will suffice to note that *Manu*'s king spends his day thinking much more like an *Arthaśāstra* king than either of these epic kings.

Nonetheless, *Manu* and the *Mahābhārata* have this much in common with these urgings of the king to think: everything he should consider is a *dharma*-topic. No matter how we date the *Mahābhārata* relative to *Manu*, we should not fail to appreciate the latter's originality here. In the *Mahābhārata* this usage is a character-building device, and considering that the epic even tells us that Vyāsa not only knows his characters' thoughts but can shape them and, as a character himself, even prompt what they have to say,[167] this is no minor feature. *Manu*, on the other hand, uses the same device to give narrative form to a nameless, silent, and neutral king who has no character at all. I propose to call him a default narrative king. He is a king through whom *Manu* can fashion a model that could apply to all kings, little and grand. That is made possible because *Manu* gives him both a temporal dynamism through these minor and major narratives (and in identifying the king with the *yuga*), and a spatial dynamism with respect to the "circle of neighboring kings," about whom he must constantly strategize.[168] But it is also made possible because *Manu*'s king both acts and thinks. With this crypto- or proto-narrative device, Manu gets his teachings not only under the king's skin but into his head. Though the king is always hedged around by his ministers, he is also necessarily recognized for having to think for himself.

Now if we look at *Manu*'s minor and major narrative sequences together, it appears that the king remains as "small scale" in the second as he was in the first, which established him on his throne. Manu positions this little king with start-up capital, not even married before he establishes himself as a king, much as he does

167. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 33–91, especially 80–82, and chapter 9 below for an example concerning Yudhiṣṭhira.

168. See Olivelle's extensive notes on the different types of royal neighbors the king must deal with (2005, 300–303).

the Snātaka, each in an in-between world that also includes all kinds of possibilities—but with marriage for both among the first orders of business. To enable these portrayals and give direction to their intersecting paths, *Manu* adds a chief trait for each: for the Snātaka—Olivelle's "bath-graduate"—that he has bathed to last a lifetime; and for the king, that he can wield the *daṇḍa* with "statutory purity" or "instant purification," leaving him unaffected by the impurity of bloodshed (*M* 5.93–98; see Olivelle 2005*a*, 284; von Stietencron 1997). Says *Manu*:

> The taint of impurity (*aghadoṣa*) does not affect kings, votaries (*vratinām*), and those engaged in a sacrificial session (*sattriṇām*); for they are seated on the seat of Indra and are ever one with brahman. (M 5.93)

As Biardeau observes of this and other such passages, "The *dharma* of the Kṣatriya king is truly peculiar: his rapport with purity is its essential index. It is thus that kings are not submitted to impurity, any more than Brahmins are who are undertaking observances or occupied with sacrificing. . . . One sees that the violence inherent to royal *dharma* and to well-regulated exercise of the *daṇḍa* poses no particular problem. It is easier for a king to be pure than for a Brahmin" (Biardeau 2002, 1: 91). Moreover, the only *dharmasūtra* to speak of the statutory impurity of kings is *Vasiṣṭha*, who does so while specifically discussing the king's role in suppressing crime by punishment (19.38–47). Since only *Vasiṣṭha* does this,[169] it is again evidence that *Vasiṣṭha* would be later than *Manu*—although in this case, rather than attributing the closely parallel verse to Manu, Vasiṣṭha attributes it to Yama!

> The rule is that kings always become pure immediately after they carry out capital as well as non-capital punishment: the reason for this is simply time. In this connection they quote a verse proclaimed by Yama: "The stain of impurity does not affect kings, as well as people performing vows and sacrificial sessions, for they are always seated on the throne of Indra and become one with Brahman." (*V* 19.47–48; Olivelle 2003, 429)

Manu fits his verse into a kind of aside on the king while dealing with the overarching topic of bodily purification. *Manu* does not cite it in his main discussion of the king, which *Vasiṣṭha* does, making it likely that it is *Vasiṣṭha* who has

169. One can see the uniqueness of *Vasiṣṭha* among the *dharmasūtras* on this matter from Olivelle 2005*c*, 24, 152–53, where Olivelle shows *dharmasūtra* parallels on the treatment of "statutory purity of persons and articles"; and Olivelle 2005*c*, 31, 216–26 concerning the king's role in "crime and punishment." Olivelle 2003, 687 on *V* 19.48 merely cites the parallel; Olivelle 2005*a* 284, on *M* 5.83, does not.

sharpened the focus of the rule, and is thus, again, the later of the two. Perhaps his attribution to Yama is *Vasiṣṭha*'s way of giving the rule greater weight.

On the other hand, *Manu*'s singular orchestration of a rapport between the bath-graduate and the king plays on a theme that was crucial to the way Brahmanical culture distinguished itself from the heterodoxies: the still wider rapport between the Brahmin and the king. For classical Brahmanical authors, such a mode of self-distinction was both a necessity and a matter of choice as to how to go about theorizing *dharma* and personalizing it through stories. It was necessary in that the heterodoxies did not concede superiority to the Brahmin, and it was a matter of choice where it came to making the king so pivotal, and not only the king but the urgency of his being a Kṣatriya with Vedic credentials. The heterodoxies had no qualms about non-Kṣatriya kings and had nothing at stake in tracing that class back to the Veda.

Manu's upstart king would find some precedent in *Āpastamba*. But he would also be a reflex of the small-scale early Vedic chieftain and the later Vedic Vrātya, who can lead a band of trekking warriors and can be a Brahmin as well as a Kṣatriya—figures who anticipate the medieval Rājpūt of "achieved" rather than "ascribed" status.[170] As such, he is a reflection of a real tension at the heart of Indian kingship that can be traced back at least to the rise of metropolitan states, which swallowed many little kingdoms and would have provoked both resistance and adventurers who founded new ones, and probably back further to the early Vedic tension between the two types of kingship exemplified by the emperor Varuṇa and the chieftain Indra. As many have noted, the Pāṇḍavas themselves can be viewed in a Vrātya or little Rājpūt mold.[171] Once they have established themselves at Kurujāṅgala, they are unable to assert real sovereignty until the two most martial among them, Bhīma and Arjuna, along with Kṛṣṇa, disguise themselves as Snātakas; and in that ambiguous status, which denotes that they have finished their Vedic studies and puts advantage to the fact that not just Brahmins can be Snātakas, they go to the great metropolitan capital of Magadha to eliminate the emperor Jarāsaṃdha (see chapter 13).

Both the *Mahābhārata* and *Manu* thus want their start-up kings not to be upstarts or parvenus, and this requires that they be Kṣatriyas: something that in the *Mahābhārata* entails great genealogical contortions—above all by the

170. On the Vrātya, see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 129–40, 148–84 with pertinent bibliography. On the medieval errant Rājpūt, see Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, *passim*, with pertinent bibliography, most notably Kolff 1990.

171. And not just scholars, among them notably C. V. Vaidya (1905, 56–57, 71–75, 164, 176; 1907, 163), but regional martial oral epic reenplotments of the *Mahābhārata* from virtually all over India (see Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, *passim*).

author, who can intervene to sire the heroes' fathers as Kṣatriyas even though he is himself a Brahmin (see chapter 8). All these texts are in fact reinventing the Kṣatriya. *Gautama* surely has some kind of "legitimate" Kṣatriya in mind, but suggests things could be otherwise when he urges that the Snātaka live in a kingdom "inhabited mainly by Āryas, full of energetic people, and ruled by a righteous man" (9.65). But *Manu* admits a more difficult reality, and warns his Snātaka not to "live in a kingdom ruled by a Śūdra, teeming with unrighteous people, overrun by people belonging to heretical ascetic sects (*pāṣaṇḍagaṇākrānte*), or swamped by lowborn people" (4.61).[172] Nor should his Snātaka accept gifts from an *ucchāstravartin* king: "one who deviates from the provisions of the authoritative texts" or "follows a wrong *śāstra*" (4.87)—"for example, Jain or Buddhist scriptures" (Olivelle 2005*a*, 271). As we shall now see, the epics and *Manu* would know a "real world" in which "real vedic" Kṣatriyas would have been hard to find already for centuries.

172. On Śūdras, see above n. 60 and § E above at nn. 133–36. Cf. *M* 4.218 on Snātaka avoidance of Śūdras, among others.

6

Dharma over Time, I

Big Time Dharma

As previous chapters show, while *dharma* could be spoken of as in some sense everlasting or eternal, it was also susceptible to change over time. This chapter and the next will compare ways that both Buddhist and Brahmanical texts wrestled with this tension. This chapter will consider the grand schemes of cosmic time in which familiar classical *dharma* texts contextualize change. Chapter 7 will then be concerned with how both traditions produced prophesies of dharmic doom during virtually the same period focused on much the same geography: the Brahmanic tradition in the *Yuga Purāṇa*, and northern Buddhists in texts that predict what will happen when the Buddhist *dharma* ends.

In setting these discussions around the topic of *dharma* over time, we thus undertake two surprisingly overdue comparisons. First, studies of Buddhist and Brahmanical cosmologies have not noted the contrastive ways they relate change in *dharma* to their vastest concepts of time. In this comparison, the likely priority of the Buddhist *kalpa*, noted already in two usages in the edicts of Aśoka Maurya (see chapter 2), will again be important. Second, as to the prophesies of *dharma*'s decline that will be taken up in chapter 7, although they have been the subject of elegant studies, these very studies were done without considering the Hindu or Buddhist counterparts, and there has been little follow-up to them. These comparisons are thus overdue.

A. *Kalpas* and *Yugas*

In beginning with large cosmological concepts, I start with some comments in Johannes Bronkhorst's 2007 book *Greater Magadha: Studies in the Culture of Early India*. Bronkhorst challenges orthogenetic theories that project modern visions of a unified "India"—grounded in the unfolding of the Veda—back on India's post-Vedic classical past. In opening his discussion of the "fundamental spiritual ideology" that would have distinguished Greater Magadha's non-Vedic heterodoxies, Bronkhorst distinguishes four "features" of "what must have been the culture of Greater Magadha" (55): funerary practices, medicine, the godlike status of the sage Kapila, and what he calls "cyclical time." This last section is, however, brief (69–71) and, I believe, hasty on matters that concern the two most prominent classical Indian time concepts, *kalpas* and *yugas*.

Bronkhorst speaks generally about "a cyclical notion of time, in which *kalpas*, *yugas* and other time units" impact later Hinduism. Leaving one to think that *kalpas* and *yugas* would have a common background in Greater Magadha, he does not take note that they are probably concepts with separate early histories. As Luis González-Reimann has observed, the *kalpa* appears to begin as a distinctly Buddhist concept with its first documentable usage possibly being by Aśoka in a couple of his edicts:[1] to be precise, the two mid-career edicts that we discussed in chapter 2. I believe González-Reimann is right to conclude that the word *kalpa* was "appropriated" from Buddhist sources into Brahmanical texts.[2] Moreover, as Jan Nattier indicates,[3] and as González-Reimann also demonstrates,

1. See González-Reimann 2008; cf. 2002, 129, 198 n. 98; cf. 64, 70, 167 n. 19, 169–72 nn. 36–37. Cf. Pingree 1963, 238; 1990, 275 on the Buddhist *kappa* being "much earlier" than the *yuga*, whose appearances in the *Mbh* and *Manu* he dates (I think too tardily) to "about the second century A.D." I differentiate *yuga* chronometry from usages of *yuga* and even *yugānta*, which do occur in the Pāli canon; see González-Reimann 2002, 62–64; 70.

2. González-Reimann 2008, 10, adding that during what he takes to be the lengthy history of the *Mahābhārata*'s growth, "the cycle of four yugas became principally the cycle of the decay and renewal of *dharma*, while the *kalpa*—by now [i.e., in some *Śānti-* and *Anuśāsana-Parvan* passages and in the "late" *Bhagavad Gītā*] associated with the day of Brahmā—was reserved exclusively for the period of cosmic world destruction and renovation" (2008, 10). See *Idem*, 3–4, discussing *Mbh* 12.224–25 as one of the epic's two more "important sections" on "time periods and/or cosmic cycles," in which 224.28–40 goes "from a *nimeṣa* to a day of Brahmā as lasting 1,000–12,000-year periods, with a night of the same duration, with a verse on the length of Brahmā's day that is "repeated verbatim" at *BhG* 8.17, which "establish[es] Kṛṣṇa's status as the source and end of everything." González-Reimann says that the passage "has a parallel" at *Manu* 1.61–85. I discuss my disagreement with González-Reimann's textual stratifications below.

3. See Nattier 1991, 115 n. 130: "The fact that Buddhist texts (from the Gupta period and after) occasionally refer to the Hindu four-*yuga* system strongly suggests that the Buddhists had no multi-era system of their own"—such as the three-age system that Buddhists would introduce in China. Cf. 280–81 n. 3, citing a *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* passage with reference to the Guptas, with important points about Gupta and post-Gupta Buddhist usages.

yuga calculations are *not* mentioned by Buddhists until quite late[4]—nor does the *yuga* appear to be a feature of the time-reckoning of the other heterodoxies.

Moreover, whereas the *kalpa* can rather reasonably be identified with calculations of cyclical time, and indeed more so than the competing Jain and Ājīvika concepts current in Greater Magadha that have more to do with downswings and upswings of time, cyclicity is less clear in the *yuga*, which lends itself more readily to accounts of linear and indeed historical time.

Bronkhorst also endorses, if a little tentatively, González-Reimann's "conclusion 'that the yuga theory is a relatively late addition' " to the *Mahābhārata* (2007, 72, citing González-Reimann 2002, 202). I will not be in agreement that the *yuga* theory, with its chronometry of four ages, could be a "late addition" to the *Mahābhārata*. But the important point for now is the one of regionality. Taken together, Bronkhorst and González-Reimann allow us to identify the *kalpa* as the distinctively Buddhist entry among the competing notions of the vastness of time that were advanced in Greater Magadha, and perhaps the only one that could properly be called cyclical.

This, however, brings us to a major contrast between the Buddhist and Brahmanical traditions that has so far gone unnoticed. Whereas it can be taken as axiomatic,[5] even though we shall have to reckon with some nuances, that the Brahmanical tradition dissociates the *kalpa* from *dharma* and links *dharma* primarily with the *yuga*, and secondarily with the *manvantara* ("interval of a Manu"), early Buddhism, doing without *yugas* and *manvantaras*, did link *dharma* with the *kalpa*. Indeed, we saw Aśoka doing precisely this in his two mid-career edicts. In the first of them, in Rock Edict 4 (RE 4), he expressed his hope that the changes in *dhaṃma* conduct that he had initiated would continue to increase, thanks to his "sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons, . . . until the end of the world (*āva sa(ṃ)vaṭṭakappā*)." As we shall see momentarily, the terms Aśoka uses here are clearly Buddhist, and moreover complex. For in linking *dharma* with the *kalpa*, Buddhism gave the *kalpa* varieties and complexities that Brahmanical texts ignored—largely, I will be arguing, because the Brahmanical texts found the *yuga* theory more congenial to such complexities. This is a matter of considerable implications.

4. González-Reimann leaves some uncertainty where he says the "yuga theory" "extended beyond Hinduism, and was early on an important part of Indian Buddhism. Jainism, likewise, . . . although the Jain theory of cosmic cycles does not include the yugas" (2002, 169–70). The Buddhist (2002, 167) and Jain (188 n. 19) theories he cites are not early, and it is not clear that they specifically mention *yugas*. See further González-Reimann 2002, 64 on the nonuse of "Kali" with *yuga* in Pāli texts; 70 on the term *yugantavatā*, "the wind of *yugānta*," but only in a Pāli Jātaka commentary; 129 on a Gupta period Jātaka; 172 on a Kali yuga prophesy by Avalokiteśvara regarding Maheśvara in perhaps the sixth-century *Kāraṇḍavyūha*; 198 n. 98 on a post-Gupta Buddhist adoption of *yuga* chronology.

5. See Biardeau 1981*b*, 70, 89–90, 113–14, and the "universe de la *bhakti*" graphic, 172.

B. Buddhist and Hindu *Kalpas*

Buddhist cosmology knows *kalpas* (Pāli *kappas*) of three overarching types. The major heading is the "great aeon" (*mahākalpa* or *mahākappa*). Great aeons have four sub-*kalpas* called "incalculable aeons" or "innumerable aeons" (*asankheyya-kappas, asaṃkhyeya-kalpas*). And "incalculable aeons" have sub-*kalpas* called "intermediate aeons" or "interval aeons" (*antara-kappas, antara-kalpas*). If several Buddhas appear in one "intermediate aeon," it can be qualified as a "good aeon" or "blessed aeon" (*bhadra-kappa, bhadra-kalpa*). In appearing as one of several Buddhas in the present such *kalpa*, Śākyamuni and the others make it a "good aeon" (Strong 2001, 22)—a term found across sectarian boundaries and probably behind grander Mahāyāna formulations as well (Nattier 1991, 8, 21–22, 25–26).

The complexity thus begins with the four kinds of "incalculable aeons" that make up a "great aeon." An incalculable aeon of destruction is followed by an incalculable aeon of the duration of destruction (when nothing is manifest), an incalculable aeon of renovation or re-"creation," and an incalculable aeon of the duration of renovation (when the world of beings is in full swing until the next incalculable aeon of destruction). In Pāli, the four incalculable aeons are called *saŋvaṭṭa-*, *saŋvaṭṭaṭṭhāyi-*, *vivaṭṭ a-*, and *vivaṭṭaṭṭhāyi-* (*AN* 2.142.15–28). Clearly, in aspiring to have turned the corner toward progress in *dhaṃma* that will last "until the end of the world (*āva sa(ṃ)vaṭṭakappā*)," Aśoka's fourth rock edict supplies a Prākrit equivalent to the Pāli *saŋvaṭṭakappa*. Rock Edict 5 then uses the same phrase and compound in the form *āva saṃvaṭṭakappā*. Curiously, only the Girnār versions of these two edicts use this precise terminology. Elsewhere, at four other sites, each edict has the reduced phrasing *āvakappam* or a variant—that is, without using *saṃvaṭṭa* (Bloch 1950, 100, 102; Hultzsch 1969, 189, 191). This implies only "the end of a *kappa*" rather than any specific kind of sub-*kappa*.[6] Odds are that the two Girnār inscriptions have benefited from a locally knowledgeable, perhaps "scriptural," interpolation, perhaps in collaboration with a monk. But the important point is that with or without *saṃvaṭṭa*, it is an Aśokan inscription from Aśoka's own time, and shows a contemporary Buddhist transposition into stone of a specifically Buddhist understanding of "kalpa." If we concentrate for a moment on the usage with *saṃvatta*, matters are not straightforward. The four-term cycle of incalculable aeons can be abbreviated to *saŋvaṭṭa-vivaṭṭakappa* (*DN* 1.32–33), which Walshe ([1987] 1995, 74) translates as "period[s] of contraction and expansion."

6. Hultzsch observes the difference, translating *āva saṁvaṭa-kapā* (or a variant) in the Girnār edicts as "until the aeon of destruction (of the world) (1969, 7–11), and translating *āva kapa[ṁ]* in the Kālsī edicts, for instance, as "until the aeon (of the destruction of the world)" (30–34).

This seems to reverse the order or the implications of the terms, for according to Rhys Davids and Stede, "with reference to the Universe and time (*kappa*)," *saŋvaṭṭa* means "rolling on or forward" and refers to the "ascending aeon" as the opposite of *vivaṭṭa*, which means "rolling back" with reference to "the descending cycle." Thus the pair *saŋvaṭṭa-vivaṭṭa* refers to "a period in which evolution and dissolution of the world takes place, a complete world cycle."[7] Rhys Davids and Stede address the ambiguity that would seem to lie behind Walshe's translation: "as 'periods' of the world they mean practically the same thing and may both be interpreted in the sense of a *new* beginning. . . . We sometimes find vivaṭṭa in the sense of 'renewal' and saŋvaṭṭa in the sense of 'destruction,' where we should expect the opposite for each" ([1921–25] 2003, 637). Most likely, since the Girnār usages imply a terminus, they would either mean that progress in *dhaṃma* could continue "until the end of the ascending cycle," or, as with Walshe's translation, "until the next period of contraction." What is most interesting for our purposes, however, is the context in which Aśoka speaks of the "end of the world" with or without *saṃvaṭṭa*. As we saw in chapter 2, he positions his reign to have effected a turnabout in the progress of *dhaṃma* not only with regard to a kalpic future that will be secured by his children and descendants but with reference to past "centuries." He begins RE 4, "In the past, over many centuries, killing, violence done to creatures, discourtesy to relatives, and disrespect for Brahmins and Samaṇas have only increased. But now, . . . promulgation of *dhaṃma* has increased that which did not exist over many centuries: abstention from killing, kindness to creatures, respect to relatives, respect for Brahmins and Samaṇas, and obedience to mother, father, and elders." Yet all this has fallen flat, a year later, in RE 5, where he has turned everything over, including implicitly his children and descendants, to his newly appointed *dhaṃma* superintendents.

Now if we set aside its mention of disrespect for Samaṇas, RE 4 recalls the past in terms of the same types of failures in *dharma* that Brahmanical texts will soon enough ascribe to the Kali yuga. By RE 5, it is clear that the attempt to imagine the progress of *dhaṃma* over the long haul of the *kalpa* was a bad fit, and that if Aśoka had been able to conjure with a theory of yugas, he might have been better served. Not surprisingly, RE 5 is the last we hear from Aśoka about "the end of the world."

Indeed, Aśoka's long progress of *dhaṃma* is not only hard to square with Buddhist *kalpas* in general but with the further complexities one meets in the four kinds of incalculable *kalpas*, each of which is said to have twenty intermediate aeons (*antara-kalpas*). During an incalculable aeon of destruction, intermediate aeons are, as Nattier puts it, "rather meaningless" (1991, 16; cf. 2008*a*, 153),

7. See Rhys Davids and Stede (1921–25) 2003, 656 on *saŋvaṭṭa*; cf. 187 on *kappa*; 637 on *vivaṭṭa*.

since there are no beings affected. But when an incalculable aeon of renovation begins, "the receptacle world (*bhājanaloka*) is created" in the first of its twenty intermediate aeons, "while beings appear in the remaining nineteen."[8] Brahmā is only the first being caught up in the devolution of beings at the beginning of an aeon of renovation, and he accordingly gets linked with some false views, including that of "creation" itself—as in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (*DN* 1), where Brahmā thinks he is the Creator only because he finds himself the first person on the scene and desires a creation, and later arrivals subsequently think he created them because "he was here first."[9] During this time the duration of life is said to be infinite. But that begins to change in the first intermediate aeon of an incalculable aeon of the duration of renovation. And through the last nineteen intermediate aeons of an incalculable aeon of the duration of renovation, human life oscillates between eighty-thousand years and ten years (Kloetzli 2007, 153–54). What is most significant about these twenty intermediate aeons of an incalculable aeon of the duration of renovation is that "they mark the boundaries between the periods of decline (when the human life span grows progressively shorter) and those of advance (when the reverse of this process takes place)" (Nattier 1991, 16). Within this scheme, a Buddha's *dharma* has of course a beginning with his first sermon (see chapter 4 § B), and it will also have an end. If Buddhas do appear in an intermediate aeon, which is a rarity, it is within a downswing period of decreasing life span during an aeon of the duration of renovation (Nattier 2008*a*, 156). Here there is a difference among Buddhists: whereas in the Nikāya schools Buddhas cease to appear when human life spans get shorter than one hundred years, in the Mahāyāna they can continue to be born even after that in "the period of the Five Corruptions" (Chappell 1980, 141). The extreme rarity of a Buddha teaching the true *dharma* thus occurs within a vast panorama of aeons within aeons.

Like the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, the *Aggañña Sutta* (*AS*), which we discussed at the end of chapter 4, probably taps into an unschematized and perhaps presystematized version of this cosmology to focus mainly on something like the beginning of an incalculable aeon of renovation. Both *suttas* trace the primary evolution of beings rather wryly, beginning from the beings' mental existence;[10] and the *AS* continues to trace their evolution down to gendered and social embodiment and the "contracting" of the first king. Yet although the intricate Buddhist *kappa*

8. See Kloetzli 2007, 153–54, drawing this information from Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*.

9. See *Brahmajāla Sutta* (*DN*) 1.2.2–5; Walshe [1987] 1995, 75–76, another famous satire of a Brahmanical view.

10. See chapter 3, n. 200 on Collins's view of its "studied vagueness about the [*AS*'s] cosmogony." Up to the point of Brahmā desiring companions and the first finger-dipping, the *Brahmajāla* and *AS* present situational and even verbatim parallels (see Nattier 1991, 11 n. 4), but then take different turns. The *Brahmajāla* quickly dispenses with anyone taking Brahmā seriously as the Creator (*DN* 1.2.6).

cosmology is mentioned in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* and is well established in the Pāli canon,[11] the *AS n*ever mentions the term *kappa* or anything about life spans, and takes the evolution of beings both deeper back and further forward than an incalculable aeon of renovation might lead one to expect.[12] For present purposes, however, what is of interest is that whereas the *Brahmajāla Sutta* does not trace the course of *dharma* through time, the *AS* makes the course of *dharma* through time central to its parable. As we saw in chapter 4, before beings start to differentiate "things" (*dharmas*) that are wholesome from those that are not, they first come to the point of confusing *dhamma* with *adhamma* and engaging in "that which is not the true *dhamma*": householder sexuality. The true *dharma* (*saddhamma*, *saddharma*) must await the coming of a Buddha, something that does not even happen in a *kappa* of renovation, but only in a *kappa* of the duration of renovation. If the *AS* includes "what is not the true *dhamma*" among things that evolve in a prior incalculable aeon of renovation, or even in its carry-over into an incalculable aeon of the duration of renovation, it could be telling us what the true *dhamma* would default or revert to when a Buddha's *dhamma* disappears, which, on the vast scale of inter-*kappa* time, happens both too rarely and too quickly.[13] The sexualized householder *dharma* it would default to would, naturally, be something like Brahmanical householder *dharma*.

Buddhist chronometry, which never settled on the number of periods the Buddha's *dharma* would pass through before disappearing,[14] links periodization of the Buddhist *dharma*, from beginning to end, and however many such periods there may be, to the appearance of a Buddha. When a Buddha delivers his first sermon and turns the Wheel of the Law, he does so only long after the previous Buddha's *dharma* has disappeared, and only after he himself has rediscovered the *dharma* after gaining complete and perfect enlightenment absolutely on his own.[15] Buddhas could extend their life span, and thus their *dharma*, to the end of a *kalpa*, but at least in Śākyamuni's case, which is paradigmatic, they do not.[16] And when

11. See *SN* 2.15.5–8, 10 (Bodhi 2000, 654–57), among the "Connected Discourses on Without Discoverable Beginning," five similes: on the length and number of *kappas* involving a mountain, a city with mustard seeds, disciples remembering past aeons, the sands of the Gaṅgā (addressing a Brahmin), and a heap of bones; Bodhi 2000, 716, 822 n. 37: Mahāmogallāna could have lived for an aeon; *Idem*, 1723–24, 1940 n. 249: "the Tathāgata could live on for the aeon or for the remainder of the aeon"; *Idem*, 1758: recollecting "A thousand aeons."

12. See Nattier 1991, 18; Kloetzli 2007, 154, discussing the recapitulation of the *AS* in the *Abhidharmakośa*. The *AS* also implies a prior incalculable aeon of the duration of destruction as deep background.

13. The *Sakkapañha Sutta* [*DN* 21] carries this idea along with an explicit statement as to what can be known of *dharma* in a time without a Buddha. Says Sakka to those he "considered to be ascetics and Brahmins" whom he sought out to teach him, but who rather turned to him for answers: "Then I taught them the Dhamma as far as I had heard it and practised it" (2.27).

14. See Nattier 1991, 46; 2008, 157–58, showing that there was no standard numerology in Nikāya Buddhism, and leading into making the same point for the Mahāyāna.

15. For good discussions, see Strong 2001, 15–34; Nattier 2003, 2008.

16. This is addressed implicitly in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* where the request that the Buddha extend his life is tied to discussion of the continuation of the *dhamma* beyond it, though without a timetable. An inverse

a Buddha passes into final *nirvāṇa*, his *dharma*, in accord with his fundamental teaching (*dharma*) that all conditioned things (*dharmas*) are impermanent, will have a limited duration before it disappears like his predecessor's. These ideas take many forms, and one cannot be sure that the earliest formulations included the expectation of a future Buddha. Stories of past and future Buddhas and predictions of the end of the *dharma* are overlapping ideas, but are usually found separately. For instance, in what is probably the earliest end-of-the-*dharma* prediction, when the Buddha says the true Dhamma (*saddhamma*) will last only five hundred years rather than a thousand because of his decision to admit nuns to the monastic order, he does not mention the future Buddha Maitreya (Pāli Metteyya). But there is no reason to think that the idea of future Buddhas is any younger than the prediction about the effect of nuns on the duration of the *dharma*.[17]

Both the duration of a Buddha's life span and the time his *dharma* lasts thereafter are said to differ from one Buddha to another. Śākyamuni was able to predict the duration of his *dharma* past his lifetime, even if his predictions differ from text to text (Nattier 1991, 19–20). According to texts that make such calculations, it will take 5.6 billion or 560 million years between the death of Śākyamuni Buddha and the coming of the next Buddha, Maitreya. In a single world system like ours, for a bodhisattva to become a Buddha, he would not only have to wait for the disappearance of his predecessor's *dharma*, but to be "the next candidate in line" (Nattier 2003, 183–84; 2008, 159). Even with the innovation of multiple worlds and Buddhas of the ten directions, he would still have to find a "Buddha-free zone."[18]

Like Buddhist *kalpas*, Hindu *kalpas* operate cyclically and willy-nilly. In a technical sense, in each tradition they operate independently of *dharma*.[19] Or by varied interpretation, they are a dimension of *dharma* as cosmic law (Hindu), or of what is true when seen as it really is (Buddhist).[20] But whereas Buddhist *kalpas* cycle along without divine agency, with Brahmā only deluded in *thinking* he is the

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relation is made explicit in the Chinese translation of the *Candragarbha Sūtra*, where the Buddha says "he will renounce one-third of his life span for the benefit of sentient beings, thus prolonging the life span of the Dharma" (Nattier 1991, 182). On the so-called "infinite life," according to his name Amitāyus, of Amitabhā, who is mortal in the earliest translation of the larger *Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtra*, and still "not immortal" in the more celebrated subsequent translation, see Nattier 2003, 188–92.

17. See Nattier 1991, 30–33: The story blaming nuns is not found in the "surviving literature" of any of the Mahāsaṅghika schools, but only in "schools on the Sthavira side of the family tree" (most notably the Theravādins, Sarvāstivādins, and Dharmaguptakas). This could mean that it was not part of the Mahāsaṅghika-Sthavira split that Nattier dates here to ca. 275 BCE. Nattier offers this as evidence that the story may be no earlier than 200 BCE, but suggests a 340–200 window. For other discussion, see 33 n. 16; cf. Nattier 2008, 156–57.

18. See Nattier 2003, 185, 193; 183–84 on the "structural or cosmological problem" posed in early Buddhism by its one-Buddha-at-a-time principle. For an articulation of this principle, see *Mahāgovinda Sutta* [*DN* 19] 2.14.

19. On the Brahmanical *kalpa*, see Biardeau 1994, 21–22, noting that on this point it is difficult to confound *kalpa* and *yuga*.

20. See Nattier 1991, 5 n. 1: "Both Hindus and Buddhists agree that the overall structure of the cosmos (that is, the rules by which it operates) will remain unchanged."

Creator, for Hindus Brahmā *is* the Creator. Moreover, in the fully developed form of what Biardeau calls the epico-purāṇic "universe of *bhakti*," Brahmā's divine agency is subordinated to the still higher agencies of Viṣṇu and Śiva, with whom his function as Creator is performed cyclically in conjunction with their higher roles as Preserver and Destroyer, respectively. In these contexts, where the three deities together can be called the Trimūrti (the "Three Forms" of Brahman or the "Triune Godhead"), a *mahākalpa* or "great aeon" becomes the term for a Life of Brahmā: a hundred years of three-hundred-and-sixty Brahmā Days and Nights during which the universe formed from the primal Elements as an Egg of Brahmā (*brahmāṇḍa*) survives until it dissolves back into those Elements. Meanwhile, *kalpas* or aeons—with *kalpa* having become the standard term for a Day of Brahmā—bubble up, and for each such Day, Brahmā (or Viṣṇu in the form of Brahmā) (re)-awakens to (re)-create a triple world of earth, atmosphere, and heaven, which lasts until it is dissolved into "the single ocean," after which come Brahmā Nights of equal duration. Thus whether or not Brahmā is really the Creator, he appears at the beginnings of *kalpas*.

As in Buddhism, the Hindu *kalpa* also defines certain possibilities for salvation that transcend Brahmā. For Buddhists, as noted, it assigns the interval—a downswing period of decreasing life span within an intermediate aeon of an incaculable aeon of the duration of renovation—during which a Buddha may appear, reach *nirvāṇa* himself, and, at Brahmā's encouragement, teach a *dharma* that brings salvation to *arahants*. For Hindus, upon the dissolution of the triple world at the end of a *kalpa*, saintly beings can resort not to Brahmā but to Nārāyaṇa, a form of Viṣṇu; and upon the dissolution of the egg of Brahmā at the end of a Life of Brahmā or *mahākalpa*, all beings are released by the dissolution of the Elements thanks to the ultimate divine agency of Viṣṇu or Śiva as the Supreme Person (Puruṣottama). When a Brahmā dies (or perhaps better depersonalizes himself and "becomes Brahman")[21] at the completion of a "great *kalpa*," the Hindu *dharma* becomes irrelevant: matter itself devolves leaving all beings liberated.[22]

If, as seems to be the case, these are the primary ways in which the two traditions initially formulate these soteriological chronometries, it may be said that epico-purāṇic *bhakti* Hinduism, or at least later Purāṇic *bhakti* Hinduism,

21. Cf. Biardeau 1981*b*, 91, 97–98, 140. Although Brahmā's "death" seems to be poorly reported, if indeed all beings include him, it would not be tasteful to exclude him from a universal salvation. I take his transmigratory salvation to be implied by the swan or gander (*haṃsa*) he rides, which, with its etymological explanation "*so 'ham so 'ham*" ("resolvable to *ahaṃ sa*, 'I am that'" [MW 1286]), indicates his oneness with the undying *ātman*.

22. See Biardeau 1981*b*, 39, 98, 111–15, 152–57; Hiltebeitel and Kloetzli 2004. It is interesting that according to the *Kevaddha Sutta* (*DN* 11), Brahmā reveals with some embarrassment that he does not know "where the four elements cease without remainder," while the Buddha seems to treat the question as if it were like those that do not lead to edification (see Walshe [1987] 1995, 178–80).

joins the Mahāyāna in converting the *kalpa* from structuring a drama that concerns the salvation of individuals (once-in-a-blue-moon Buddhas and *arahants*) into a drama that envisions universal salvation.[23] Indeed, Purāṇic *bhakti* Hinduism envisions universal salvation at the end of a *mahākalpa* (a life of Brahmā) rather than in an improbably unusual sub-*kalpa* (intermediate aeon) of a sub-*kalpa* (incalculable aeon) of a *mahākalpa*. We must, however, leave a gap between epico-purāṇic and Purāṇic *bhakti* (cf. Biardeau 1994, 16–18), since the *Mahābhārata* never explicitly connects the idea of a Life of Brahmā with a *mahākalpa* or implies that universal salvation would come with it. Indeed, González-Reimann points out that the epic uses the term *mahākalpa* only four times "without ever defining it, and it doesn't seem to have a specific meaning."[24] He goes so far as to say that the Purāṇas add the Life of Brahmā as a fourth cycle beyond the *kalpas*, *yugas*, and Manvantaras.[25]

One passage in a highly devotional *Mahābhārata* segment called the *Nārāyaṇīya* is especially instructive in confirming such an open meaning of *kalpa* in the epic. It occurs in two successive chapters or *adhyāyas*, and it is important to look at how *kalpa* is used in them in context.[26] First, in *adhyāya* 12.326, the Ṛṣi Nārada has just returned, rather spectacularly, from White Island (Śvetadvīpa) with revelations about Nārāyaṇa, who resides there, and Yudhiṣṭhira, who is hearing this account from his grandfather Bhīṣma, asks Bhīṣma how it is that Brahmā seems not to know what Nārada has learned, and whether Brahmā is really different from Nārāyaṇa (12.326.103). Bhīṣma replies,

> Thousands of great aeons and hundreds of great aeons (*mahākalpa sahasrāṇi mahākalpa śatāni ca*), and hundreds and thousands of creations and dissolutions come after one-another. In the beginning of a creation, the wise lord, the creation-maker Brahmā, is remembered.[27] He knows, moreover, that the best of gods, being the supreme self (*paramātman*), the lord, as also source of the self, is superior to him, O king. (12.326.104–5)

23. The Mahāyāna will promise salvation to all beings once all beings realize that the universe is empty, but this will still require the appearance of Buddhas and the teaching of their *dharma*. Similarly, in Hindu knowledge traditions, in principle, a realization of the Self's oneness with Brahman shortcuts the skein of time.

24. See González-Reimann 2008, 9, presumably referring to the occurrences he mentions (3 and handout Table) at *Mbh* 13.110.71 and in the *Nārāyaṇīya* at 12.323.1 and 326.104 (with two).

25. González-Reimann 2002, 4, presumably identifying the *mahākalpa* (unmentioned here) with the Life of Brahmā.

26. The contributors to *Nārāyaṇīya Studien* (Schreiner 1997) all work from the premise that *adhyāya* 326 ends "Part A" of the *Nārāyaṇīya*, and *adhyāya* 327 begins "Part B." From this standpoint, the transition should be pivotal, but it goes unexamined because their discussion focuses only on the supposed lateness of Part B. González-Reimann 2008 discusses usages of *kalpa* in the two *adhyāyas*, but not in full context.

27. By Nārāyaṇa, says Ganguli ([1884–96] 1970, 10: 558), I think correctly; alternately, Esnoul 1979, 120: "Au début d'une création on rapport que Brahmā émet les créatures."

Bhīṣma then recounts how Brahmā revealed this knowledge to other divinities, and how it was further transmitted to Bhīṣma himself (326.106–11). Bhīṣma then tells Yudhiṣṭhira that this story is transmitted within a Vāsudeva *bhakti* tradition, and that Yudhiṣṭhira should take this opportunity to please Kṛṣṇa-Janārdana, who is there listening, by worshiping him as Puruṣottama, the supreme divinity (113–20)—after which "Dharmarāja and his brothers all became dedicated to Nārāyaṇa (*nārāyaṇaparābhavan*)" (121). The story seems to link "remembering" Brahmā with the beginnings of great aeons, and thus, perhaps implicitly, with Brahmā Days. But nothing is said about such days, much less their adding up to a Brahmā's life.

Then in its next chapter, the *Nārāyaṇīya* comes to a surprising lurch.[28] Up through *adhyāya* 326, the *Nārāyaṇīya* has been moving along at the epic's main dialogue level. What Bhiṣma and Yudhiṣṭhira have been saying to each other has been recounted by Vyāsa's disciple, the Brahmin Vaiśaṃpāyana, to the Pāṇḍavas' descendant, King Janamejaya, who is listening to the epic while performing a vengeful snake sacrifice. It is customary to call this dialogue level the epic's inner frame. Now, however, that Vaiśaṃpāyana has finished the story of White Island, which has involved so many revelations about Nārāyaṇa, suddenly the dialogue level shifts to the outer frame in which Śaunaka, the leader of the Ṛṣis of the Naimiṣa Forest, is listening to the *Mahābhārata* being recounted by the bard Ugraśravas, who had come to Naimiṣa Forest to tell the Ṛṣis there "the same" *Mahābhārata* that Vaiśaṃpāyana had told Janamejaya. One has barely heard from this second dialogue level since the *Mahābhārata*'s first book, the *Ādiparvan*, but now the Brahmin Śaunaka, the "anchorman" of the Naimiṣa Forest sages, chimes in out of the blue,[29] and asks Ugraśravas the first question that has come to mind from hearing the White Island story.

Śaunaka asks about Nārāyaṇa. How, while he is "established in *nivṛtti dharma*, enjoying peace, ever the beloved of Bhāgavatas," do the other gods come to accept sacrificial shares according to *pravṛtti dharmas*, while *nivṛtti dharmas* are "made for those who have turned aside" (327.2–3)? Here we meet two broad orientational terms using *dharma*: *pravṛtti-dharma*, generally the normative lifestyle for the householder, and *nivṛtti-dharma*, the normative lifestyle for the ascetic. As Bailey (1985) demonstrates, the two include

28. See Hiltebeitel 2006*a*, 229–49, and, with some corrections, 2011*a*, chapter 7, discussing this and two further "dips" to the outer frame erased in the Pune Critical Edition (CE) because the *Śāntiparvan* editor Belvalkar (1954–66) relied, I argue mistakenly, on an erasure of the outer frame based on Malayālyam manuscripts. See Brodbeck 2009*a*, 236 n. 12, assessing my correction back to the outer frame as "convincingly argued."

29. Thanks to Wendy Doniger for coming up with the designation "the *Mahābhārata*'s Anchorman" for Śaunaka (American Aadamey of Religion Annual Meeting, Washington DC, November 2007). On Naimiṣa (Winking, Blinking, Twinkling) Forest as a celestial place whose Ṛṣis double as stars, see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 95–161.

ideological implications that are developed, with semantic variations, in both Brahmanical and Buddhist texts. Literally, *pravṛtti* means the "act of rolling onwards" or "turning outwards," implying modes of engagement with the world consonant with dharmashastric norms. *Nivṛtti*, the "act of turning back" or "returning," implies liberation from the world through cessation or abandonment of activity consonant with dharmashastric norms. A similar term implying tension with dharmashastric norms is *mokṣadharma*, which is also highlighted in *adhyāya* 327, where it seems to showcase what the whole *Mokṣadharma Parvan* is driving toward in using both of these terms.[30] While usages of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* are fairly clear by being contrastive, usages of *mokṣadharma* seem paradoxical. In a thought-provoking article on the tensions between *sādhāraṇadharma* and *varṇāśramadharma* as both being worldly, and *mokṣadharma*, Gerald Larson describes the latter as the *dharma* that "does not fit" (1972, 149). Adam Bowles notes that *nivṛttidharma* overlaps in the *Mahābhārata* with *mokṣadharma*, and remarks that the latter looks at first blush "like an oxymoron" (2007, 153). I do not think, however, that it was meant not to fit or to be as oxymoronic as it first looks. We can consider these questions further, however, in chapter 13.

Now when Ugraśravas answers Śaunaka's question about *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, he does so by telling him what Vaiśaṃpāyana said when Janamejaya asked him "the same" question. Janamejaya had asked:

> These worlds with Brahmā, men, gods and demons are seen everywhere to be attached to rites said to assure prosperity. And *mokṣa* is said by you, O Brahmin, to be *nirvāṇa*, the supreme happiness. . . . Alas, the eternal *mokṣadharma* is surely difficult to observe (*aho hi duranuṣṭeyo mokṣadharmaḥ sanātanaḥ*), abandoning which all the gods have become enjoyers of rites to gods and ancestors. How then do Brahmā, Rudra [and other gods . . .] not know that dissolution is determined of the self. By that, they are then settled on a firm, indestructible, undecaying path.[31] Those who have remembered the measure of time are intent upon *pravṛtti*. Meting out time, that is the great fault of those given to activity.[32] That is my doubt,

30. I take up these matters in Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*b*, in a collection edited by James Fitzgerald.

31. The close of Janamejaya's first question in verse 9 is a bit obtuse: *pralayaṃ na vijānanti ātmanaḥ parinirmitam/ tatas tenāsthitā mārgaṃ dhruvam akṣayam avyayam* (12.327.9). Ganguli ([1884–96] 1970, 10: 561 n. 2 comments: "'Atmanah parinirmitam pralayam' means that destruction or cessation of existences brought about by self-realization. . . ." Esnoul 1979, 125: has Janamejaya asking how the other gods ". . . . ne distinguent-ils pas que la résorption est déterminée par leur nature même." The last line is not very clear.

32. 12.327.10: *smṛtvā kālaparīmaṇaṃ pravṛttiṃ ye samāshitāḥ/ dosaḥ kālaparīmāṇe mahān eṣa kriyāvatām.*

> O Brahmin, like a vexing thorn in my heart. Cut it by a story of history (*chindhi itihāsakathanāt*). My curiosity is surely peaked. Why do those deities addressed in sacrifices take away (sacrificial) shares? To what end are the heaven-dwellers worshiped in sacrifice, O Brahmin? Those who take the share in sacrifices, O best of twiceborns, those sacrificing with great sacrifices, to whom do they give a share? (12.327.5–13)

That Śaunaka interrupts the main dialogue level or inner frame means that the epic poets have interrupted Vaiśaṃpāyana's main narration to take us into something deep, and, moreover, something that Vaiśaṃpāyana did not tell Janamejaya in that main narration, but outside it—let us say, during an aside. Janamejaya is performing his snake sacrifice, which is a *pravṛtti* rite par excellence that involves "meting out time" for the destruction of all snakes, because a snake killed his father. His question is as existentially profound as we can expect of him. Not to disappoint him, Vaiśaṃpāyana answers him by quoting no one less than Vyāsa himself, the author (who will be revealed a little later in the *Nārāyaṇīya* to be a "portion of Nārāyaṇa" himself [12.337.4], and who, despite his great age, is a seated attendee at Janamejeya's snake sacrifice[33]). We now learn that Vyāsa's five disciples (with Vaiśaṃpāyana among them) once had the "very same doubt" while Vyāsa was with them in his hermitage on Mount Meru (327.16–19), where he composed the *Mahābhārata*. Again, presumably during some "aside," they asked him this question and he gave them a lengthy reply (327.21–98). Śaunaka's interruption in *adhyāya* 327 has thus taken us not only from the inner frame to the outer frame, but to the originating outermost frame of the *Mahābhārata* to get us to the bottom line—the *Mahābhārata* author himself—on this "vexing" question.

Vyāsa is reported to have told his five disciples about what Brahmā and the gods and Ṛṣis once learned when they went to the northern shore of the Milky Ocean to ask Nārāyaṇa about such matters. There, Nārāyaṇa remarked that he has consigned the gods to receive offerings until the end of the *kalpa* (*yāvat kalpakṣayād*; 327.60d) according to *pravṛtti dharma* for the welfare of the world. To this end, he has assigned seven mindborn Ṛṣis—Marīci, Aṅgiras, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasiṣṭha—to procreation following *pravṛtti-dharma* (326.60–62). And he has assigned seven other Ṛṣis—Sana, Sanatsujāta, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumāra, Kapila, and Sanātana ("called mental sons of Brahmā")—to be "established in *nivṛtti dharma*" as "the foremost of yoga-knowers, as also knowers of the Sāṃkhya-*dharma*," and "preceptors in *mokṣaśāstra* and promulgators of *mokṣadharma* (*mokṣadharmapravartakāḥ*) (64–65). This is a

33. On Vyāsa as attendee, see *Mbh* 1.48.7ab and Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 115 n. 71.

group of perennially liberated Ṛṣis. Finally, Vyāsa tells what happened when all the other heaven-dwellers but Brahmā had left. When Brahmā remained in place, Nārāyaṇa appeared to him, "having assumed the great Horse's Head (Hayaśiras), reciting the Vedas with their limbs" (327.80–81). The Horse's Head now reinforces the distinction between *nivṛtti* and *pravṛtti*: he charges Brahmā to oversee *pravṛtti* as the "world's creator" (*lokakartā*), and promises, before vanishing, that he himself, Nārāyaṇa, will intervene with various manifestations (*prādurbhāvas*)—later, in the Purāṇas, to be called *avatāras*[34]—to bear the work of the gods (*surakāryam*) whenever things get intolerable (82–86b). Vyāsa then continues:

> So it is that this one of great share, the eternal lotus-naveled one. . . , the eternal upholder of sacrifices, has fixed *nivṛtti dharma*, which is the destination of those whose teaching is the imperishable. He has (also) ordained *pravṛtti dharmas*, having made for the world's diversity. He is the beginning, middle, and end of creatures; he is the ordainer and the ordained, he is the maker and the made. At the end of the *yuga* he sleeps after having retracted the worlds; at the beginning of the *yuga* he awakens and creates the universe. (12.327.87–89)

Finally, Vyāsa lauds Nārāyaṇa, guarantees that all this is true, and exhorts his disciples to sing Hari's praise with Vedic words (327.90–98).[35]

Now we have just seen Vyāsa use the phrases "end of the *yuga*" and "beginning ot the *yuga*" to describe what happens when Narāyaṇa goes to sleep and awakens, where he might, were he seeking "Purānic" consistency, have used the term *kalpa*. Toward the beginning of Vyāsa's speech, he has also told what he learned by going to the northern shore of the milky ocean and performing "the height of difficult *tapas*" there. Thanks to Nārāyaṇa's grace, he obtained the "triple-timed knowledge" he desired of past, present, and future (12.327.21–23b). With that knowledge, he now recounts a primary creation down to the great elements (23c–28), which might suggest a *mahākalpa*, even though he only uses the term *kalpa* for the beginning of it (*yathā vṛttaṃ hi kalpādau*; 12.327.23e). Finally, as noted, he also uses the term *kalpa* when he gets to the end of such a cycle in the phrase "until the destruction of the *kalpa*" (*yāvat kalpakṣayād*; 327.60d). With this

34. For discussion, see chapter 11 § C. Cf. González-Reimann 2008, 6: "we hear that Nārāyaṇa, after declaring that he created Brahmā at the beginning of every kalpa and that he does so repeatedly in every kalpa, lists his several appearances on Earth, in what is probably the earliest list of avatāras, although the term used here is *prādurbhāva*."

35. With regard to Nārāyaṇa's taking on this Veda-reciting form "for the sake of *pravṛttidharma*" (12.335.68c), the *Nārāyaṇīya* further discloses that "Nārāyaṇa's supreme *dharma* is difficult to reach by those turning around again. The *dharma* characterized by *pravṛtti* also has Nārāyaṇa's nature (*nārāyaṇaparo dharmaḥ punarāvṛttidurlabhaḥ/ pravṛttilakṣaṇaś caiva dharmo nārāyaṇātmakaḥ*)" (12.335.76c–77b).

latter phrase as a touchstone, González-Reimann has noticed something very interesting about these usages of *kalpa* in the *Nārāyaṇīya*.

As González-Reimann sees it, *adhyāya* 12.327 "is of special interest" as a "discourse on the relative merits of two kinds of dharma, pravṛtti and nivṛtti." Therein, Vyāsa explains[36] why Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa propounds both orientations, and eventually quotes Viṣṇu himself "that the gods should fulfill their allotted duties until the end of the kalpa, thus ensuring that the world continues to operate properly" (2008, 7). Says González-Reimann,

> This statement about the need to uphold the brahmanical dharma until the end of the kalpa is intriguing. It is equivalent to a declaration that is repeated in two of Aśoka's stone inscriptions. In that case, King Aśoka declares that his promotion of the Buddhist dharma has improved life in the world, and that the practice of the dharma will continue to increase thanks to his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren until the end of the kalpa. It appears possible that the Nārāyaṇīya's emphasis on the need to continue the brahmanical dharma until the end of the kalpa is an answer to a proclamation like that of Aśoka regarding the Buddhist dharma's duration during the same period. Besides the thematic similarity, there is a striking grammatical parallelism as well. The Sanskrit expression used in the Epic is *yāvat kalpakṣayāt*, literally meaning "until the destruction of the kalpa." The correlative *yavāt* is followed by the compound *kalpakṣaya* in the ablative case, for the purpose of indicating duration up to a point (the end of the kalpa). Nowhere else in either of the two epics is the word kalpa used like this. However, Aśoka's inscription uses the Prakṛt āva kappa, or kappam, where āva is the Prakṛt equivalent of Sanskrit yāvat, and kappa is used adverbially. But to make the parallelism even more striking, the Girnar versions of both inscriptions has the Prakṛt *āva saṃvaṭṭakappā* (Sanskrit *yavāt saṃvartakalpāt*), where *saṃvaṭṭakappā*, "the destruction of the kalpa," is in the ablative case,[37] as in the Nārāyaṇīya's Sanskrit version. (González-Reimann 2008, 9)

36. González-Reimann has Vyāsa address Janamejaya directly, but Vaiśaṃpāyana only quotes him here. Yet Vyāsa does soon address Janamejaya in the *Nārāyaṇīya*'s third dip to the outer frame, after Śaunaka asks his "bottom-line question" about Viṣṇu's Horse's Head manifestation (*Mbh* 12.335.21–66; see Hiltebeitel 2006*a*, 246–49).

37. González-Reimann notes that Bloch 1950, 100 n. 9 indicates that the Girnār inscription "uses what he describes as an archaic ablative."

We are, in other words, on some familiar ground here with a surprising new argument based on the Aśokan usages.

Let us start out by recognizing, with González-Reimann, that the parallelism is grammatically real, though exceptional in both cases, especially in the appeal to the singular Girnār edicts for the closest analog on the Aśokan side. Let us also note that González-Reimann is careful to say that the *Nārāyaṇīya*'s emphasis on continuing the brahmanical *dharma* until the end of the kalpa might not be a direct answer to the Aśokan proclamation but an answer to "a proclamation *like that* of Aśoka regarding the Buddhist dharma's duration during the same period" (my italics). That leaves room for all kinds of intermediaries, and for the *Nārāyaṇīya* to be as late or early as one might wish. Clearly, it would be difficult to hold that the *Nārāyaṇīya* passage was responding directly to the Aśokan edicts, not to mention the Girnār one in particular, if the *Nārāyaṇīya* were composed in the Gupta period, when (as we saw in chapter 2), it seems likely that few if any could have read the Aśokan edicts any longer. I have produced some arguments that, even though the *Nārāyaṇīya* would probably be late within the two-generation span I assign to the *Mahābhārata*'s composition, it would still be part of the baseline archetype exposed by the Critical Edition.[38] But I would not see this parallelism as evidence that the *Nārāyaṇīya* would be close in time to Aśoka. Exceptional as the two usages are, they are not so surprising grammatically as to require a direct relation. This leaves us then with the question of whether the *Nārāyaṇīya* might be responding in this usage to Buddhist ideas. Here, although I think a general answer would be yes, and that González-Reimann may be right to include this passage among others that are more convincing on this point, I think it is more significant to recognize that the ideas espoused are likewise exceptional in both traditions. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, Aśoka's idea, described by González-Reimann as saying that the Buddhist *dhaṃma* will last to the end of the *kappa* through his descendants, actually pertains only to RE 4. By RE 5; he seems to be about to drop it. In relation to more conventional Buddhist ideas about kalpas, it would seem, in its basic form using only *āva kappa* or *kappam*, to be an unusual extrapolation from them meant to make what I called a bad fit with Aśoka's mid-career aspirations for the Mauryan dynasty. And the modification at Girnār looks like someone's effort to make some sense of it in technical Buddhist terms. Meanwhile, on the Brahmanical side, the *Nārāyaṇīya* is equally atypical in making a connection—a looser one than González-Reimann implies, but one nonetheless—between *dharma* and the full course of a *kalpa*. Yes, *pravṛtti dharma* will continue to the end of the

38. See Hiltebeitel 2006*a* and 2011*a*, chapter 7; 2010*d*, arguing that it would be earlier than Aśvaghoṣa's first- or second-century CE *Buddhacarita*; and forthcoming-a.

kalpa, but as something that concerns only the gods who receive sacrifices over a very long time that has little to do with how human beings lead human lives through such things as families, dynasties, history, and *yugas*. The *Nārāyaṇīya* is on an entirely different plane here from REs 4 and 5.

The *Nārāyaṇīya* may thus be said to leave the gap we have been mentioning between the epics' open treatment of small-to-vast units of time and the more systematic treatment of such units that one meets in the Purāṇas. A word, however, is indispensible here on how the *Mahābhārata* takes such temporal matters as only part of a daunting meditation on time that engages the question of *dharma* over time in multiple intersecting ways.[39] In the *Nārāyaṇīya*, for instance, when Śaunaka summarizes what he has learned so far before asking his third question about the Horse's Head, he mentions what he has learned from his second question about the bewildering relation between Nārāyaṇa in White Island and the Ṛṣis Nara and Nārāyaṇa at their Badarī hermitage in the Himalayas. There, as he puts it, Nārada had heard of Nārāyaṇa's "birth in the house of Dharma in the person of Nara and Nārayaṇa."[40] What is meant by the house of Dharma? Unfortunately, Śaunaka did not make it a fourth question, but it is worth asking. The *Nārāyaṇīya*'s first two mentions of the house of Dharma connect it with the Pāñcarātra doctrine of the four vyūhas: the four forms or bodies in which Nārāyaṇa—as Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha—takes part in the process of primary creation. First, Nārada says, "That object for which you, O self-born being, have taken birth fourfold in the house of Dharma (*dharmagṛhe caturdhā*), may it attain its end for the welfare of the world" (2.322.2a–c). And then Nārāyaṇa says, "These are my best bodies, O twiceborn, born in the house of Dharma" (*mamaitās tanavaḥ śreṣṭhā jātā dharmagṛhe dvija*; 326.13ab), before going on to describe the four *vyūhas* in their cosmogonic roles (326.23–43). One gets to Nara and Nārāyaṇa being born in the house of Dharma only later, in the build up to Śaunaka's second question. This occurs when Nara and Nārāyaṇa, speaking unitedly in Badarī, tell Nārada:

> We two who have taken birth in the house of Dharma (*āvām api ca dharmasya gṛhe jātau*), O best of twiceborns, having resorted to this spacious delightful retreat, are engaged in fierce tapas. As to the manifestations who are surely dear to the gods, that will come about in the three worlds, may it be well for them (*bhaviṣyanti trilokasthās teṣāṃ svasti ity ato*). (12.332.19–20)

39. See Vassilkov 1999 on Vyāsa, the author, as *kālavādin*; Hiltebeitel and Kloetzli 2004 for the epic's innovations in "narrative time."

40. 12.335.1cd: *janma dharmagṛhe caiva naranārāyaṇātmakam*; see Hiltebeitel 2006*a*, 245.

It would seem that Nara and Nārāyaṇa's birth in the house of Dharma puts them at the same primal plane as the cosmogonic *vyūhas*, and that their relation is something more primordial and elevated than the triple world, where the manifestations will come into being (*bhaviṣyanti*) for its periodic welfare.[41] Yet their rapport also has its backing in the passage where Nārāyaṇa foretells his manifestations:

> When all the powerful kings of the earth have come together, Vāsavi [Arjuna, Vāsava-Indra's son] will surely be my good companion. So people will call us the Ṛṣis Nara and Nārāyaṇa; joined together, we two lords (*īśvarau*) will burn the warrior class for the sake of the world's cause. I will make a terrible dissolution (*kariṣye pralayaṃ ghoram*), destroying my own kinsmen. Bearing four forms (*caturmūrtidharo*), having done immeasurable acts, I will go to the worlds of mine that are honored by Brahmins. (12.326.90–93)

It would seem, then, that the house of Dharma brings the primordiality of the *vyūhas* together with at least one of the manifestations: that of Kṛṣṇa. And with that, we could be reminded that Arjuna might be said to be born into the house of Dharma in that his older brother Yudhiṣṭhira's father is precisely the god Dharma. This is probably not what is meant, but there may be some resonance, at least for Yudhiṣṭhira as he hears all this. From what we have gathered so far, I would propose that the house of Dharma is the created universe seen from the standpoint of Nārāyaṇa's institution, for it, of both *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti dharma*.

Fortunately, however, we do have one more clue to pursue, in that the *Nārāyaṇīya* also knows of Dharma as one of twenty-one Prajāpatis who emerge more or less coevally into the creation.[42] This is the second of two narratives I will now examine, by which the *Mahābhārata* describes the origins of *dharma* in cosmogonic time. I will then turn to *Manu*'s treatment of *dharma* in relation to the *kalpa*, *yuga*, and Manvantara, where it will be also possible to briefly recapitulate the *Mahābhārata's* treatment of these chronometric terms in the *Nārāyaṇīya* and elsewhere.

C. Originary *Dharma* in the *Mahābhārata*

The *Mahābhārata* gives its first glimpse of the primordiality of *dharma* in the early front matter of the *Āstīkaparvan*, which as told from the standpoint of

41. Note that Grünendahl 1997, 232–40 ascribes epic *vyūha* representations to a "late" textual "layer" introduced by a school of "epic Pāñcarātrins" that would nonetheless be earlier than the Pāñcarātra sect, which may be from Gupta times.

42. The list (12.321.33–35) begins "Brahmā, Sthāṇu, Manu, Dakṣa, Bhṛgu, Dharma, Tapas, Restraint (*dharmas tapo damaḥ*)" (33ab), for which "Dharma and Yama" (*dharmas tathā yamaḥ*) is a Northern variant.

outer frame, sets the background for Janamejaya's Snake Sacrifice at which the epic will first be told. Ugraśravas tells Śaunaka how the Nāga (serpent) Śeṣa separates himself from other Nāgas because they are too filled with enmity. Śeṣa performs austerities (*tapas*) until Brahmā notices. Once Brahmā questions him and is gratified by the explanation, he offers Śeṣa a boon:

> I wish to grant you a boon, for I am very pleased with you. It is by good fortune, O best of snakes, that your mind is set on dharma (*diṣṭyā ca buddhir dharma te niviṣṭā*), and on dharma it shall be set ever firmer. (1.32.15c–16)

Since Śeṣa had never mentioned the term *dharma*, we may say that Brahmā's exegesis on Śeṣa's *tapas* as *dharma* puts the idea into the serpent's head.[43] Śeṣa adopts it.

> This is the boon I desire, Great Grandfather. May my mind rejoice in dharma, and in tranquility (*śama*) and austerity, Lord! (32.17)

Brahmā credits Śeṣa that this will be for the well-being of creatures. He appoints him to encircle the earth with her mountains and oceans and to bear her on his head, and they work out the details (18–22). Brahmā then concludes, telling him, "You are Śeṣa, the best of snakes, god of *dharma* (*dharmadeva*), for you alone uphold (*dhārayase*) this earth" (23ab). He thus offers an etymological link between Śeṣa's appointment as *dharmadeva* and his "upholding" (√*dhṛ*) of the earth. The etymology is then repeated by Ugraśravas, who now calls Śeṣa Ananta, making this "god of *dharma*" "the endless (*ananta*) remainder (*śeṣa*)," and adding that Brahmā gave Ananta the friendship (*sakhāyam*) of Garuḍa (24–25).

Śeṣa is identified with the second *vyūha* Saṃkarṣaṇa in the Pāñcarātra doctrine unfolded in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, and when Kṛṣṇa's brother Balarāma-Saṃkarṣaṇa dies while engaged in yoga, a white snake leaves his mouth and enters the ocean, where it takes on a mountainous size with a thousand heads (*Mbh* 16.5.122–23). From this angle, the initial story about Śeṣa could be located in the formation of what the *Nārāyaṇīya* calls the house of Dharma, which would place Balarāma in that house along with Nara and Nārāyaṇa. But the passages in Books 1 and 16 leave such interpretation to readers. The *Āstīkaparvan* narrative is explicit only about linking Śeṣa with *dharma* in upholding the earth in space. But it also implies that he upholds the earth through time, and thus represents something of the continuity of *dharma* over time, particularly through

43. Again we may raise here the question "Do animals know *dharma*?" on which the epics, at least explicitly, say that they do not (see chapter 5 n. 20 and chapter 8). Obviously, some animals (given time and the occasion) appear to be exceptions.

the Days and Nights of Brahmā, or what will be more regularly called *kalpas* in the Purāṇas. As the "Endless Remainder," Śeṣa comes to represent the continuity of *dharma* not only through Brahmā Days, when he can uphold the earth, but through Brahmā Nights, when, with the earth having undergone its periodic dissolutions into the "single ocean," he can rise to the surface of that ocean to form the couch for the sleeping Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, at whose awakening Brahmā is "remembered." In this, the Śeṣa narrative is more primal than our next sequence, but since both Śeṣa and Garuḍa are born into primal genealogies, it is also in that regard part of our second story as well.

This second narrative calls to mind ways in which the *Mahābhārata* is in tune with a cosmogonic sequence that opens the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* passage (1.4.11–14) in which Brahman is not "fully developed" until it has created *dharma* (chapter 3 § F). The epic also considers *dharma* something to account for mythically as a coeval but still not a primary component of the cosmogonic process. As noted in the case of the *Nārāyaṇīya*, the *Mahābhārata* knows Dharma as a Prajāpati: a designation that can refer to Brahmā (who is the first of the Prajāpatis mentioned in the *Nārāyaṇīya*'s list of twenty-one)—and also, in contrast to Brahmā's mindborn sons who remain celibate, "to those sons of Brahman [Brahmā] who beget children" (Ganguli [1884–96] 1970, 9: 89). The epic tells how such a personified Dharma emerged in Athena-like fashion—not, however, from the brow:

> The blessed Lord Dharma, assuming human form, issued forth by breaking open the right nipple of Brahmā (*stanaṃ tu dakṣiṇam bhittvā brahmaṇo naravigrahaḥ*), bringing happiness to all the worlds (1.60.30).[44]

Further, it tells several times how Kaśyapa, Dharma, and Soma (the Moon) become husbands of the fifty daughters of the Prajāpati Dakṣa. Thirteen of Dakṣa's daughters marry Kaśyapa (the primal Ṛṣi who fathers Śeṣa and the Snakes and Garuḍa and the Birds with the sisters Kadrū and Vinatā), ten marry Dharma, and twenty-seven wed Soma. Dakṣa's daughters are *putrikās* (1.60.11c; 70.7b), which means that he sires them to have sons for his own descent rather than that of their husbands. Not surprisingly, *Manu* knows the same story, giving it two verses (9.128–29) as background to his discussion of *putrikās*.[45] What is pertinent presently is that the wives marrying Dharma and the Moon

44. Thus van Buitenen, trans. 1973, 149, with "nipple." Cf. Hopkins [1915] 1969, 199, taking it to be Brahmā's "heart," which is somewhat implausible, as it is a matter of the "right" side of his "breast" or "chest" (*stanam*).

45. For discussion, see Brodbeck 2009*a*, 48–56, 63–65, contrasting *putrikās* with *pativratās*, and 89–90, 102, on Dakṣa's daughters, but focusing only on the ones who marry Soma. See also Hopkins [1915] 1969, 190, 199.

bring about the conjunction of beings (the generations born of Kaśyapa)[46] with *dharma* over time. Dharma's wives and offspring enter the world as qualities or virtues that coincide with the ordering of time that takes place through the Moon's marriage to the twenty-seven daughters of Dakṣa who are the twenty-seven lunar mansions through which the Moon passes in measuring time through the month. Dharma's ten wives are:

> Fame (Kīrti), Fortune (Lakṣmī), Resolve (Dhṛti), Intelligence (Medhā), Growth (Puṣṭi), Faith (Śraddhā), Religious Action (Kriyā; see MW 321), Intellect (Buddhi), Shame (Lajjā), and Mind (Mati). They are the doors to Dharma that have been ordained by the Self-Existent. (1.60.13–14)

Meanwhile, the twenty-seven "faithful wives of the Moon are appointed to the procession of Time (*kālasya nayane yuktā*); they are all the fairies of the lunar mansions (*sarvā nakṣatrayoginyo*), which regulate life in the world" (60.15–16).[47]

> Dharma is then said to have . . . three sons, fetching the hearts of all creatures—Tranquility (Śama), Desire (Kāma), and Joy (Harṣa), who sustain the world with their glory. Desire's wife was Pleasure (Rati), Tranquility's was Possession (Prāpti), and Joy's Was Delight (Nandī), upon whom the worlds are founded (*yatra lokāḥ pratiṣṭhitāḥ*). (1.60.31–32)

Desire thus flows from Dharma, and, once Desire is joined with Pleasure, implying sexuality, Kāma and Rati become a famous mythological couple. Nonetheless, Dharma's sons are as abstractly named and disembodied as their parents (even Kāma becomes "the bodiless God" when Śiva burns him to ashes). Indeed, with Tranquility marrying Possession (Prāpti), we may be reminded that the latter has the name of a prominent term among the fourteen "dissociated forces" (*dharmas*) of Sarvāstivādin Buddhism that are neither

46. Kaśyapa's wives give birth to Beings: that is, gods, demons, snakes, birds, fish, animals, Gandharvas, Apsaras, plants, etc. (1.59.12–50; 12.200.25–28). Men through Manu as a descendant of Kaśyapa are included at 1.70.9–11.

47. Van Buitenen trans. 1973, 148. The point is reinforced just after this, where Dhruva, the Pole Star, "begot our lord Time, who is the reckoner of the world (*dhruvasya putro bhagavān kālo lokaprakālanaḥ*)" (1.60.20cd). Cf. 1.70.8 ff. and 5.106.4–6, with shorter accounts that make these same correlations, the latter around the theme of the sunrise in the east, "where there are the two eyes of Dharma and there *dharma* is itself established" (4cd; Hopkins [1915] 1969, 105 says Dharma's two eyes are Soma and Agni). 9.34.40–58 is about Dakṣa demanding that Soma spend equal time with all twenty-seven of Dakṣa's daughters, rather than preferring Rohiṇī. 12.200.17–29, explains the time component instead through Viṣṇu. At 12.329.45–46 (in prose), the *Nārāyaṇīya* also has the Rohiṇī story, and gives Dakṣa sixty daughters, with the extra ten going to Manu.

physical nor mental,[48] and wonder what the outcome or purpose of such an odd couple might be. Apparently, on the analogy of Desire and Pleasure, Tranquility comes with Possession or Ownership, which could hardly be a normative Buddhist view. Indeed, it can be said that what the *Mahābhārata* personifies as wives, sons, and daughters-in-law of Dharma are abstract impersonal *dharmas* for the Sarvāstivādins. In any case, since Desire, Tranquilty, and Joy have *putrikā* mothers, they would be technically sons of Dakṣa—unless Dharma produces them without his wives, which could be indicated by their being mentioned separately from his marrying them.[49]

Adharma, on the other hand, apparently emerges without parents, but still finds his genealogical niche. After Liquor (Śurā) was born from Varuṇa and his wife Jyeṣṭhā, Adharma was born from creatures (*prajā*) who began devouring each other when they were hungry. Marrying Nirṛti, after whom Rākṣasas are called Nairṛtas, she (or they?) had three terrible sons: Fear (Bhaya), Panic (Mahābhāya), and Death (Mṛtyu) (1.60.51–53).

The *Mahābhārata* can tie such matters in loosely with the *yugas*. This is done, for instance, at *Mbh* 12.220, an *adhyāya* indicative of an increasingly devotional momentum in the *Mokṣadharma Parvan* that culminates in the *Nārāyaṇīya*. Once this chapter tells how Dakṣa's fifty daughters marry Kaśyapa, Dharma, and the Moon, it bypasses discussion of the wives of Soma and instead attributes the creation of "day and night, time, the seasons, morning and evening" to Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu-Madhusūdana (200.17–29). Then, the origin of the four *varṇas* (a hundred Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras come respectively from Viṣṇu's mouth, arms, thighs, and feet; 31–32) leads into an account of the *yugas*. Sexual union (*mathuno dharmaḥ)* is traced back only to the Dvāpara *yuga* (35–37). And "those without supervision" (*niradhiyakṣān*),[50] that is, outliers in each of the four directions including the Greeks (*yauna*), Kāmbojas, Gāndhāras, Kirātas, and Barbaras in the north, are traced back to the prior Tretā *yuga*. These were all evil-doers (*pāpakṛtas*) who "move on this earth having the nature (*dharman*) of dogs, crows, ravens, and vultures" (*śvakākabalagṛdhrānāṃ sadharmāno*); they did not exist on earth in the Kṛta *yuga*, but originated and started multiplying in the Tretā *yuga*, and contributed

48. Van Buitenen 1973, 149 calls her Attainment. See chapter 4 § B.2.c, translating *prāpti* as "possession" or "ownership." Cf. Hopkins [1915] 1969, 199, translating this Prāpti as "Possession." The *Mbh* also gives Prāpti as the name of a daughter of Jarāsaṃdha—perhaps, as I have said elsewhere, with Buddhist overtones as well (see Hiltebeitel 1989, 97–98).

49. Elsewhere Dharma's sons with Dakṣa's ten daughters are groups of gods: the Vasus, Rudras, Viśvedevas, Sādhyas, and Maruts (*Mbh* 12.200.23).

50. *Mbh* 12.200.38c. The term, which has some variants, is contrasted in the same verse with those who are *svadhyakṣa*, "good to be inspected" (MW 1280).

to unspecified events[51] that occurred at "the terrible twilight time at the end of that *yuga*" (*tatas tasmin mahāghore saṃdhyākāle yugāntake*) (38–43).

But the main account of the marriages of Dakṣa's daughters that I have been following is narrated as background to the "divine plan" behind the epic's main narrative. At some indeterminate point, but implicitly not too long ago when demonic forces had already beset the world, the goddess Earth came to Brahmā to ask help in relieving her of the burden caused by the demons who had taken birth in human lineages upon her lest she be submerged prematurely in the waters of time. We are assured that "Earth's business (*bhūmeḥ kṛtyam*)[52] had long before been known" to Brahmā, "For how could he, the creator of the universe, fail to know entirely what is lodged in the minds of the worlds of Gods and Asuras, Bhārata" (1.58.41–42). So with Nārāyaṇa Vaikuṇtha's (Viṣṇu's) concurrence (49–51), Brahmā ordered a "descent of the portions" of the gods into human lineages.[53] Genealogies are then described for the generations of all beings, with Dharma, as we have seen, among the more primordial gods. And these genealogies come to focus on the lineage of the heroes of the central Paurava-Bhārata-Kuru Dynasty into which the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas will be born. Though the divine plan will reach its concentration point in their generation, the following two verses suggest a long time for it to have ripened: "And so the celestials in succession descended (*avateruḥ krameṇa*) from heaven to earth for the destruction of the enemies of the Gods and the well-being of all the worlds: thereupon they were born in the lineages of Brahmin seers and the dynasties of royal seers, as desired (*yathā kāmam*), O tiger among kings" (1.59.3–4). The role of the gods' desire (*kāma*) thus remains instrumental. It is important to recognize that this account subordinates all genealogy to the divine plan.[54]

Since the *Mahābhārata* can be this diffuse and interwoven on topics of *dharma* over time, it will be useful to defer our discussion of what it has to say on more precise chronometry until we have considered their treatment in *Manu*. In this regard, I urge consideration of the possibility that *Manu* may condense and reorient the *Mahābhārata*'s take on these matters. Our starting point, however, is to note that with *Manu* and the *Mahābhārata*, early classical Brahmanical texts already extricate *dharma* from the rhythm of *kalpas* and assign the ups and downs

51. Ganguli ([1884–96] 1970, 9: 90 n. 3) says, "It was at this time that that dreadful famine occurred which compelled the royal sage Viswamitra [Viśvāmitra] to subsist on canine haunch"—referring *Mbh* 12.139.

52. Also called the "cleansing of the earth" (*bhuvaḥ śodhana*; 1.58.51a).

53. 1.58.35–51. At 46–47, Brahmā orders the gods to incarnate through *bhāgas*, "portions" or "shares" of themselves, as also the Gandharvas and Apsaras. But the more recurrent term is *aṃśa*, "portion" or "particle," as used in *aṃśāvataraṇa*, "descent of the portions," summarily at 1.61.99c, and often echoed (see chapter 12).

54. See chapter 12 § A on the *Mahābhārata* divine plan in relation to divine plans in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Harivaṃśa*, and even *Manu*, and scholarly resistance to it. See Hiltebeitel forthcoming-g. Such resistance has also long sustained most *Rāmāyaṇa* studies; see most recently González-Reimann 2006*a*.

of *dharma* to the *yuga*. If we may speak of the Buddhist and Brahmanical traditions as presenting alternate dramas about the course of *dharma* over the vastness of time, the Brahmanical tradition, by moving its more experiential chronometry from the *kalpa* to the *yuga*, would have made this transferal a "wedge issue." We may thus ask what it might mean that Brahmanical chronometry detaches *dharma* from the *kalpa* and links it instead with the *yuga*. To answer this, we should now consider how the earliest classical *dharma* texts presented the *yuga*, *kalpa*, and other temporal units before they were lodged into the systematic shape we find assigned to them in the Purāṇas. I will argue that the *Mahābhārata* and *Manu* are the texts that drove this wedge in its earliest formulations, and that the *Yuga Purāṇa* takes off from what the *Mahābhārata* has to say about *yugadharma* as the basis for its ex eventu prophesies, which yield information about the historical conditions under which this larger Brahmanical scheme was generated.

D. *Kalpas, Manvantaras,* and *Yugas* in *Manu* and the *Mahābhārata*

By Olivelle's analysis, *Manu*'s first *adhyāya* (*M* 1) begins with thirty-one original verses followed by two interpolated "excurses" totaling twenty-six verses, and then, after three more original verses, continues with five more "excurses" totaling fifty-nine verses (2005*a*, 53–54). As I indicated in chapter 5 § C, I believe he underestimates his own findings on the structure of *Manu* for the text's compositional unity, and note that the first use of the signature line at *M* 2.25 by which *Manu* indicates divisions of the text can be taken to include the whole of *adhyāya* 1, as Olivelle initially does himself (2005*a*, 7–9, 52). I believe Olivelle's willingness to name so many segments by different topics does not give credit to the significance that cosmology, combined with taxonomy and pedagogy, probably had for *Manu* in composing a unifying preamble to his text; as I suggested in chapter 1, *Manu* may have drawn on sources from other knowledge traditions to include some of these topics. I also believe that Biardeau's idea that *Manu* presents elements of primary and secondary cosmogony rightly directs us to consider *Manu* 1, even with its "patchwork" character, as a whole. *Manu* contextualizes *dharma* with respect to units of time with orderliness and statistical simplicity, but while getting to that, its whole frame account, as Biardeau says, is a "maladept" "patchwork of more or less ancient reminiscences" (2002, 1: 93–94), mixing Vedic and Upaniṣadic allusions into an epico-purāṇic sequencing of a primary creation from the Elements and a secondary creation.[55] Moreover, early on, one may see an outcropping of

55. Cf. Bühler's finding ([1886] 1969, lxxxi–lxxxc) that twenty-three and a half verses from *Manu*'s cosmogony scattered between *M* 1.18–86 are similar to and in some cases identical with thirty-eight consecutive

familiarity with epic *bhakti* in a verse explaining the name Nārāyaṇa (*M* 1.10). Or, as Biardeau, sees it, the verse may reflect a Vedic sense of Nārāyaṇa:

> It is in appearance asserted very logically in a place where the waters are mentioned as appearing, since this is a constant referent for the verse's connection with the deluge. The incongruity comes with the name being one of Viṣṇu when he takes the form of Brahmā to create the world around the sacrifice in the second creation. But Manu doesn't know Viṣṇu, and Brahmā suffices for his Supreme Puruṣa sleeping on the water. This probably shows Manu's proximity to the Vedic heritage, where Nārāyaṇa is known without Viṣṇu. (Biardeau 2002, 1: 96)

In any case, whereas the epic introduces what Biardeau calls a "swerve" in the Brahmanical tradition toward *bhakti*, *Manu* "resists" this swerve "by which the Brahmanical tradition goes on to renew itself" (2002, 1, 96). Yet *Manu* seems to regularize what the epic has to say about *dharma* over time with regard to *yugas* and possibly also about Manvantaras.

As one might expect, where *Manu* begins organizing its treatment of time itself, it does so with a chronology of Manus, prioritizing an account of six Manus in the lineage of Manu Svāyambhuva, and mentioning their Manvantaras or "Manu Intervals" (*M* 1.61–63). Manvantaras, which I will say more about when *Manu* returns to them, are thus introduced even before units of time are detailed from a "moment" (*nimeṣa*) to the two halves of the year, which are equated to a day and night of the gods (64–67). From the year, a day and night of Brahmā is calculated in *yugas*: a four-*yuga* (*caturyugam*) sequence constitutes a *yuga* or age of the gods (*devānāṃ yugam*) lasting twelve thousand years, and a thousand such divine *yugas* "should be regarded as a single day of Brahmā, and his night as having the same duration" (68–72).

After this come three intriguing verses on the high value of this knowledge:

> Those who know this propitious day of Brahmā having 1,000 Ages [= *divine yugas*], as also his night with the same duration—they are the people who truly know day and night (*rātriṃ ca tāvatīm eva te 'horātravido janāḥ*). At the end of that day-and-night, he awakens from his sleep; and when he has woken up, he brings forth the mind, which is both existent and non-existent (*pratibuddhaś ca sṛjati manaḥ sadasadātmakam*). The mind, driven by the desire to create, transmutes

Mbh verses (12.224.11–48 in the Pune CE; 12.232.11–233.17 in the Bombay ed. used by Bühler). The parallels include a few details from the first cosmogonic stage such as the creation of the great elements (*M* 1.18ab = *Mbh* 12.224.43cd), and more from the second, for example, on *dharma* and the *yugas* (*M* 1.81–86 and *Mbh* 12.224.23–27).

> the creation. From the mind is born ether, whose distinctive quality is said to be sound. (1.73–75; Olivelle trans. 2005*a*, 90)

Who are these "people" (*janāḥ*) who really know? And what do they know? One thing they know is that the sum of time is counted in terms of Days and Nights of Brahmā, and not in terms of *kalpas*. As Biardeau (2002, 1: 94) and González-Reimann (2008) have noticed, *Manu* makes no mention of the *kalpa* here as an equivalent term for the Day of Brahmā. Yet *Manu* knows the term, using it, though only once for a large or at least ancient unit of time, in a passage noted in chapter 5:

> In a former aeon (*purā kalpe*) gambling was seen to create great enmity; therefore, an intelligent man should never engage in gambling even for fun. (*M* 9.227)

Clearly, *Manu* knows something of the *Mahābhārata* (see chapter 5 § F). *Manu* here is either using *kalpa* as interchangeable with *yuga*, which, as we have already seen, the *Mahābhārata* also does; or, more likely, it uses *kalpa* because its own chronological setting requires a temporal relocation. Since Manu should be delivering his *dharmaśāstra* before the *Mahābhārata* occurs, it should refer to a *Mahābhārata* event either in the future, as prophesy, or in a deeper past than could be suggested by the term *yuga*. *Manu* could thus be implying that what happens in the epic could also have happened at a similar *yuga* juncture in another long-ago aeon. This could have a certain coherence if we remember the primordial standpoint from which Manu speaks as a lawgiver for all times. Not in the habit of prophesy, he has chosen precedent.

In any case, *Manu* has not yet connected the *yugas* with *dharma*. This may be because their significance to this point is only transitional in accounting for time from its smallest to largest units. But more likely, it resonates with what "the people" who know Days and Nights really know: that what belongs to the nature of mind and is both existent and nonexistent and driven to create by desire is a cosmogonic impulse that transcends or ontologically precedes *dharma*. All this probably fuses a proto-Sāṃkhya cosmogony of the five great Elements from Ether down to Earth with patchworked Vedic allusions to *ṚV* 10.129, and to the opening cosmogonies of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, including one discussed in chapter 3 where *brahman* was alone and "had not fully developed" until it created *dharma* (*BĀU* 1.4.11–14). Something very un-Buddhist is thus offered in affirming *brahman*'s (or Brahmā's) thinking about creation.

Once the account of primal creation proceeds from mind through the great Elements (76–78), Manvantaras are calibrated into the day of Brahmā (79–80). Like creations (*sargas*) and destructions (*saṃhāras*), Manvantaras are

said by *Manu* to be "incalculable" (*asaṃkhyāni*), and all three fall under what "the Supreme Lord does again and again as a kind of sport."[56] Creations and destructions imply an equivalence with Days and Nights of Brahmā, which would be further equivalent to *kalpas*. We thus find *Manu* once again not using the term *kalpa* where it could, yet evoking a notion of "divine play" that seems more appropriate to epic descriptions of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa than to Brahmā. Moreover, creations, destructions, and Manvantaras are given a descriptor "incalculable" that may echo the four incalculable aeons of Buddhism, while in very un-Buddhist fashion, they cycle through time by divine agency. While resisting the epic's *bhakti* swerve, *Manu* thus makes two moves: Days and Nights of Brahmā are not called *kalpas*, and Manvantaras are not explicitly linked with *dharma*. Given that the text is a "Treatise of the Laws of Manu," this might be surprising. But it seems to imply that Manus teach *dharma* for all time, and do no more than anticipate its fluctuations over time.[57]

Finally, then, *dharma* is introduced into the flow of time, and solely in connection with *yugas*:

> In the Kṛta Age, *dharma* is whole, possessing all four feet; and so is truth. People never acquire any property through unlawful means. By acquiring such property, however, *dharma* is stripped of one foot in each of the subsequent Ages; through theft, falsehood, and fraud, *dharma* disappears a foot at a time. In the Kṛta age, people are free from sickness, succeed in all their pursuits, and have a life span of 400 years. In the Tretā and each of the subsequent Ages, however, their life is shortened by a quarter. The life span of mortals given in the Veda, the benefits of rites, and the power of embodied beings—they all come to fruition in the world in conformity with each age. There is one set of *dharmas* for men in the Kṛta age, another in the Tretā, still another in the Dvāpara, and a different set in the Kali, in keeping with the progressive shortening taking place in each Age. Ascetic toil (*tapas*), they say, is supreme in the Kṛta Age; knowledge (*jñāna*) in Tretā; sacrifice (*yajña*) in Dvāpara; and gift-giving (*dāna*) alone in Kali. (*M* 1.81–86; Olivelle trans. 2005*a*, 91, slightly modified)

56. *M* 1.80: *manvantarāṇyasaṃkhyāni sargaḥ saṃhāra eva ca/ krīḍannivaitatkurute parameṣṭī punaḥ punaḥ*.

57. See González-Reimann 2002, 173 on the way Dharmaśāstra commentators "were troubled . . . by the suggestion that dharma could vary and not be immutable," mentioning Medhātithi's view in commenting on

Manu's last two verses, like some passages in the *Mahābhārata*,[58] thus assert a set of correlations between the *yugas* and certain typifying virtues.[59]

Indeed, here we may reinforce our suggestion that *Manu* could be condensing what the *Mahābhārata* has to say about *dharma* over time while resisting its swerve toward *bhakti*. *Manu* does not say that Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa has anything to do with the course of *dharma* over time. In particular, *Manu* does not report that Nārāyaṇa changes colors from one *yuga* to the next, which one finds reported twice, with the colors for the second and third yugas reversed, in the *Mahābhārata*.[60] But for the rest, although it does not indulge in anything like the *Mahābhārata*'s vast meditation on Time, with its philosophical and theological implications, it does distill most of what the epic says about basic temporal units. The *Mahābhārata* makes brief mention of the Manvantaras in the *Nārāyaṇīya*. And as regards the *kalpa*, as Biardeau (2002, 1: 94–95) and González-Reimann (2008, 2–5) show, neither the *Mahābhārata* nor *Manu* uses the term consistently, especially as distinct from the *yuga*; and neither uses it in the later Purāṇic fashion as equivalent to a Day of Brahmā—not to mention a Life of Brahmā. As with *Manu*'s mention of disastrous dicing in a former *kalpa*, the *Mahābhārata* appears to take advantage of fluctuation in the usages of *kalpa* and *yuga*, which González-Reimann calls "confusion" (2008, 72; 85 n. 150).

But most important, although the *Mahābhārata* does it so much more colorfully and recurrently, both *Manu* and the epic detail the decline of *dharma* through *yugas*.[61] As we saw in chapter 5, *Manu* begins with its "all-encompassing vast cosmological setting" in order to treat *varṇa* and *āśrama* in a context of "past, present and future." It thereby gives explanatory power to *dharma* over time while including Greeks, for instance, in its discussion of mixed castes—and with this, the reinvention of the king as a start-up Kṣatriya who could, "in reality," be of any caste. On such matters, *Manu* would be describing much the same society as the *Mahābhārata*, but with an orientation not so much to its

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Manu that "dharma itself did not change as the yugas advanced," but rather "the decreasing capacity of men in each yuga" in being "able to follow it correctly."

58. See González-Reimann 2002, 166, 188 n. 13: *Mbh* 12.224.26–27, closest to M*anu*'s two verses, lists the *yugadharmas* as *tapas*, *jñāna yajña*, and *dāna*; 12.252.8 repeats 12.224.26, preceding it by, "We hear that the teachings of the Vedas wane according to the *yuga*"; and at 12.336.28, the *Nārāyaṇīya* has Brahmā "create the yugadharmas."

59. The Purāṇas make such correlations regularly, with variations and elaborations, including sectarian passages on the good fortune of being born in the Kali *yuga* (see González-Reimann 2002, 174–78; von Stietencron 2005, 43), and long lists of practices prohibited in the Kali yuga called *kalivarjyas* (Lingat 1973, 189–95; González-Reimann 2002, 173).

60. See González-Reimann 2002, 103, 114 n. 61, citing *Mbh* 3.148.16–33 (Hanumān's version: white, red, yellow, black) and *Mbh* 3.187.31 (Mārkaṇḍeya's version: white, yellow, red, black). The important point, despite González-Reimann's wish to say otherwise (105), is that, along with Kṛṣṇa, black is being linked with the Kali *yuga*.

61. See *Mbh* 12.224.23–27, and what Hanumān has to say on the *dharma* of the *yugas* (3.148.9–36, cited chapter 5 n. 20).

past, at the end of a previous *yuga*[62] where, thanks to Kṛṣṇa, it had divine aid during the transition to this *yuga*, but to its maintenance and renewal in times of current and future change. As we have seen, M*anu* 9.301–2 agrees with, and probably restates, the *Mahābhārata* doctrine that the king is, or makes, the *yuga*. Indeed, along with the color associations of the *yugas* with Nārāyaṇa mentioned above, one of the *Mahābhārata*'s few other basic *yuga* ideas to have a Purāṇic future without *Manu* replicating it is that the four *yugas* succeed each other in the land of Bhārata (*Mbh* 6.11.3; see González-Reimann 2002, 117 n. 80; 211–14)—which the Purāṇas make something unique to Bhārata.[63]

Here, however, it becomes necessary to distinguish my approach from González-Reimann's, since it will bear on many matters in my discussion of the *Yuga Purāṇa* in the next chapter. With his view that the *Mahābhārata* accreted over many centuries, González-Reimann (2002, 2006*b*) makes his project the working out of a long developmental logic of the *yuga* concept, from "mere metaphor" and "simple story" to systematic complexities; but he takes a more restricted, if still vague, view of "Vaiṣṇavism," suggesting that the beginnings of its possible impact upon the epic would have begun "[a]round the beginning of the common era" (2006*b*, 227). As should be clear, my views on these matters are different. I do not believe the epic accreted over time. And I do not think it is convincing to stretch out the epic's treatment of the *kalpa* and *yuga* over a long hypothetical history in order to trace this kind of developmental logic—always with the assumption that "simple" usages are early and complex ones are "late." I believe the epic poets are contributing to the construction of "Vaiṣṇavism," not that some form (or forms) of "Vaiṣṇavism" impacts the epic only after "Vaiṣṇavism" has become a theological movement. The epic's *yuga* and *kalpa* chronometries are part of that construction and not late additions by a sectarian system. With these considerations in mind, I would like to move forward to the *Yuga Purāṇa* by stating two general working premises:

1. *Mahābhārata* passages that work out the complexities that relate *dharma* to time, including passages where this complexity involves

62. See chapter 5 § F at n. 147. Actually, beyond *Manu*'s agreement that the king is or makes the age (9.301), what the next verse goes on to say looks like a restatement of what *Manu* says about the king's vigilant day (see chapter 5 § G): "When he is asleep, he is Kali; when he is awake, he is Dvāpara; when he is ready to undertake operations, he is Tretā; when he is on the march, he is Kṛta" (9.301). For discussion of the more complex and diverse *Mahābhārata* doctrine, see Biardeau 1994, 47–60; 2002, 1: 609, 635, 1006–8, trying, to my mind unconvincingly, to link Duryodhana with the Kali *yuga* in a way that requires that Yudhiṣṭhira inaugurate a Kṛta *yuga*; Couture 2006, 75–76, taking the early *yugas* to represent pre-urban nostalgias; Thomas 2007, arguing that the epic means to have the king's making of the age taken literally rather than, as González-Reimann 2002 would have it, as "mere metaphor" (see chapter 7)

63. See Kloetzli 2010, 600, 607–8 on *yugas* only in Bhārata in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.

Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, will not be deemed axiomaticallty "late." These include especially the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Nārāyaṇīya*, and also passages from the *Anuśāsana Parvan* (Book 13) and the *Forest Book* (Book 3).[64] For instance, one of González-Reimann's arguments is that, in a passage cited above, the *Nārāyaṇīya* uses the term *kalpa* in a way that suggests the "possibility of a competition with Buddhism," making Brahmā subordinate to Viṣṇu as a real creator rather than to the Buddha as a deluded one. This may be so without its being a "late" addition in the epic.

2. It is always worth considering that the epic, like *Manu*, may be using the terms *kalpa* and *yuga* interchangeably not as a result of developmental "confusion" but strategically to show the interwovenness of these units over the vastness of time, and possibly as a deconstructive move over against Buddhist usage, where the term *kalpa* would stand alone.

64. González-Reimann 2008 remarks that 50 percent of the *Mahābhārata*'s thirty-six usages of *kalpa* for a long time period occur in the *Nārāyaṇīya* and nine in the *Anuśāsana*.

7

Dharma over Time, II

Prophesies of Disaster

This chapter compares Brahmanical and Buddhist prophesies from virtually the same period in "minor" (as I called them in chapter 1) classical *dharma* texts. On the Brahmanical side, we meet a short text called the *Yuga Purāṇa* [henceforth *YP*] embedded in an astronomical treatise that foretells what will befall *dharma* toward the end of the Kali age. On the Buddhist side, we meet a series of Sūtra texts not found in the Pāli canon, but only in Northern Nikāya schools and in Mahāyāna variations, which tell of a debacle that will mark the very end the *dharma*.

We can now say that these are minor *dharma* texts in that their prophesies take place off-stage from the intertextual drama that we have seen our main classical *dharma* texts scripting in chapters 4–6. But they are illuminative of that drama in that they crystallized Brahmanical and Buddhist understandings of what change entailed for an imperiled *dharma* in history as each tradition was conceiving it. We may thus continue to examine Bronkhorst's central thesis that "Greater Magadha" produced a "separate culture" (2007, 1–9), but with our attention now on the *yuga* rather than the *kalpa*. With this new focus, we will be able to ask about the ways other cultural regions responded to Greater Magadha's rise to dominance and fall into decline, including—if the sources allow it—the ways writers reflecting the cultures of other regions envisioned, indeed, constructed, their own alternate histories and different theories of time through which to frame their chronologies. In these minor *dharma* texts,

both traditions expound on distinctive concepts of decline against the background of the same historical turmoil: the incursions of Greeks and Śakas in the *YP*; and of Greeks, Śakas, and Pahlavas in the earliest of the Buddhist texts. The nonmention of Pahlavas in the *YP* would suggest that it was the earlier of the two prophesies, and with that in mind, I will treat it first. Although that evidence is not very definitive, we will find other reasons to suspect that the *Yuga Purāṇa* is earlier than the comparable Buddhist prophesies. But comparison may begin from the premise that both traditions catalyzed their prophesies against the same historical backdrop.

A. The *Yuga Purāṇa*

The *YP*, a short unit of only 115 verses, is introduced by John E. Mitchiner as having two major interests. It is "the only Indian text" that "refers in any detail to the presence of Indo-Greeks in India." And it is "important for its account of the four Yugas," being, he thinks, "probably the earliest account of the Yugas in Indian literature" (1986, vii).[1] According to Mitchiner, in terms of its overall structure, the *YP*'s "main aim" is "to give an outline account of the principal peoples and events in each of the four Yugas or Ages, as an illustration of what came to pass when *dharma* inevitably declined with the passing of time" (1986, 50). It is "primarily a Brahmin-oriented text . . . concerned with the proper maintenance of the four *varṇas* or castes" (*ślokas* 15–19).[2] "It also decries the rise of Śūdras, Vṛṣalas (low-born men) and Pāṣaṇḍas (heretics) at the end of the Kali Yuga" who usurp Brahmin roles (*śl* 50–55). It opposes changing roles of women (*śl* 82–86); is antiascetic, despising low-born Bhikṣukas, "a term applicable to both Hindu and Buddhist mendicants"(*śl* 52);[3] "and it also condemns men for abandoning an active role in favour of taking their ease as *gṛhasthas* or house-dwellers" (1986, 47).[4]

1. This section overlaps with Hiltebeitel 2010*b* and 2011*a*, chapter 4. Whereas those essays discuss the *YP*'s value in contextualizing the *Mahābhārata*'s primary genre identification as "history" (*itihāsa*), on which see now chapter 1 n. 25, this section is shaped to make this chapter's comparison with Buddhist narratives. It also introduces comparison with prophesies by Vyāsa at the end of the *Harivaṃśa*.

2. Curiously, *śl*. 19 says that in the Tretā Yuga each class was intent upon its *svakarma*, but shifts the terms for the Dvāpara Yuga, in which everyone did their *svadharma* unquestioningly (*śl* 27) until the *Mahābhārata* war.

3. It also scorns dressing in red (*raktavāsas*) (Mitchiner 1986, 47, citing *śl* 86; see 55 n. 112). See Bhattacharya 2008.

4. The criticism of *gṛhasthas* strikes me as unusual. I am familiar with such a view only in some Buddhist suttas. Could it air a critical view of wealthy estate-holding *mahāsāla* Brahmins in the Greater Magadha area?

This so-called "*purāṇa*" is found in an astronomical/astrological treatise called the *Gārgya-jyotiṣa*. Mitchiner argues, I believe convincingly, that it is composed as part of this treatise, although one might consider the possibility that it was an added component. Mitchiner proposes that the *YP* was composed in Ujjain—"itself well-famed as a centre of *jyotiṣa*-studies" or astronomy and astrological sciences (79–80), probably in Brāhmī (31, cf. 36), around 60–25 BCE, with the later date the most likely (81; cf. 5, 11, 16). Mitchiner's main evidence is that the *YP* mentions Yavana and Śaka incursions, which continued down to 60 BCE, but not the Pahlava incursions into northwest India that probably did not occur until early in the first-century CE.[5] This is a rather loose terminus. As we shall see, there could be other reasons why the *YP* stops its north Indian history without getting to the Pahlavas or Kuṣāṇas. But the selective history it describes all precedes them. I believe the *YP* may be a bit later than 25 BCE, perhaps by half a century, and that it was probably composed during the period of Śaka consolidation between ca. 25 BCE[6] and the rise of the Kuṣāṇas. The Śakas established themselves as Kṣatrapas (Satraps), forming trade networks and points of power from the northwest to central north India, and supporting mainly Buddhism.[7]

The title *Gārgya-jyotiṣa* implies that the *YP*'s author would be named Garga or Gārgya, a sage known in the *Mahābhārata*. In *Mahābhārata* Book 12, Garga is said to have become the "keeper of the year, the almanac maker (*sāṃvatsara*)" of the primal—and first favored—king [Pṛthu] Vainya.[8] In Book 9, Old (Vṛddha) Garga, after doing severe *tapas* at an auspicious *tīrtha* on the Sarasvatī River, is said to have obtained the "knowledge of time and of the passing-away (or, evil effects) of heavenly bodies (*jyotiṣāṃ ca vyatikramaḥ*)," and of favorable and unfavorable omens (*utpātā dāruṇāś caiva śubhāś ca*; 9.36.14–17). The association of the Sarasvatī with calendrical calculations is reminiscent of *yātsattras*: journeys up the Sarasvatī to its source in conjunction with the winter solstice, and then back down. *Yātsattras*, associated with Vrātyas, are first mentioned in the Brāhmaṇas and are referenced with surprising frequency in the *Mahābhārata*. This citation is a case in point. The listener here is Kṛṣṇa's brother Balarāma, who is

5. See Mitchiner 1986, 81, mentioning Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian settlements of ca. 25 CE; cf. Nattier 1991, 225, citing Frye 1983, 197–204: "the best current estimate is that the Parthians—the last of the three groups [after the Greeks and Śakas] to arrive on the scene—invaded northwest India sometime during the first half of the first century CE." Cf. Nattier 1991, 152 n. 17.

6. See Härtel 2007, 324: "Based on the archaeological data [at Sonkh, near Mathurā], the Mitra period ends with Level 25 in about ±25 B.C." Cf. 346.

7. See Neelis 2007, 72–79, making the point that Brahmin texts produced xenologies identifying the Śakas as adharmic barbarians, even though "Śaka support of Buddhism did not preclude their support of other Indian religious traditions" (79 n. 100); 2008*b*, 8–10, adding that "this support did not preclude the patronage of Brahmins, Jains, and other non-Buddhists."

8. *Mbh* 12.59.117cd; Fitzgerald trans. 2004*a*, 310. He is just called Vainya in this context. Cf. Mitchiner 1986, 42.

making just such a journey (Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 120–26, 138–61). Along these lines, in Book 13, the *Anuśāsanaparvan*, Gārgya reports that once when Śiva was "pleased by my mental sacrifice, he gave [me] this great wondrous knowledge of time contained in sixty-four divisions on the bank of the Sarasvatī, as well as a thousand sons conversant with *brahman* like me, and a life-span for me and my sons of a million years."[9] Note that Śiva extends these life spans without anyone using the term *kalpa*. The mention of sixty-four *aṅgas* is also noteworthy, since the *Gārgya-jyotiṣa* says of itself that it has sixty-four *aṅgas*, although it includes only sixty-two (Mitchiner 1986, 10). The *YP* is the *Gārgya-jyotiṣa*'s forty-first *aṅga*, coming in sequence after *aṅga* 39 on portents—"*Rāṣṭrotpātalakṣaṇa* (Signs and Portents of Calamity)," with twelve categories of signs and portents listed; and *aṅga* 40 on "*Tulākośa* (Weighing on a Balance)." And it is followed by *aṅga* 42 on "*Sarvabhūtaruta* (The Cries of all Creatures)"; *aṅga* 43 on "*Vastracheda* (Tears in Clothes)"; and *aṅga* 44 titled *Bṛhaspatipurāṇa*, on Jupiter, one of the other two units called a "*purāṇa*" (Mitchiner 1986, 14–16, 108–10). This *Anuśāsana Parvan* passage could be later than the epic's other two, since it refers to the same numerology as the treatise, and possibly, as Mitchiner maintains (1986, 10, 45), to the treatise itself. If the *Anuśāsana Parvan* passage shows familiarity with a *YP* from the late first-century BCE (Mitchiner's proposed date), that would still be in time to date it within the time span I proposed for the *Mahābhārata*'s composition. On the other hand, the *Gārgya-jyotiṣa*'s claim of having sixty-four *aṅgas* when it has only sixty-two could suggest that it was striving for a number it never reached on the basis of Gargya's epic reputation as an astrologer.[10] In any case, I see no reason to regard any of these passages to be late in the fashion that Mitchiner does in assigning them to the third-century CE (1986, 5).

Strikingly, in being part of an astrological text, the *YP* calculates the *kalpa* idiosyncratically.[11] Yet it innovates in treating the *yugas*, and thus *dharma*, from the standpoint of the predictive sciences. It will be my argument that it does this building on the *Mahābhārata*. As Mitchiner recognizes, the events by

9. *Mbh* 13.18.25–26: *catuhṣaṣṭyaṅgam adadāt kālajñānaṃ mahādbhutam/ sarasvatyās taṭe tuṣṭo manoyajñena pāṇḍava// tulyaṃ mama sahasraṃ tu sutānāṃ brahmavādinām/ āyuś caiva saputrasya saṃvatsaraśatāyutam//* Cf. Mitchiner's trans. 1986, 102. More fully, see Mitchiner 1986, 5, 7, 10–11, 16, 79, 101–3.

10. As a cosmological and astronomical number, 64 occurs in Archimedes' "Sand-Reckoner" as the number 10^{63} or "one followed by 63 ciphers" by which one counts the grains of sand in the universe (Kloetzli 1983, 16, 115–22).

11. Along with a 10,000,000-year *kalpa*, and without defining how long each *yuga* lasts (González-Reimann 2002, 98), the *YP* gives the *yugas* a decimally defined relation in terms of life spans of 100,000 years in the Kṛta, 10,000 in the Tretā, 1,000 in the Dvāpara, "and (by implication) 100 years in the Kali" (Mitchiner 2002, 43; *śls* 8, 21, 24, 115). Rather than the epic's and *Manu*'s 4–3–2–1 proportion of *yuga*-durations, the *YP* may befit the *Gārgya-jyotiṣa*'s interest in astronomical calculations. See further Hiltebetel 2011*a*, chapter 4.

which the *YP* characterizes the end of the first three *yugas* are also referred to in the *Mahābhārata*,[12] though the epic does not refer to the first episode—the destruction of the demon Tāraka that ends the Kṛta Yuga—in connection with that *yuga*. But for the other two, Rāma Jāmadagnya's destruction of the Kṣatriyas thrice seven times at the transition from the Tretā to the Dvāpara Yuga, and the *Mahābhārata* war with the transition from the Dvāpara to the Kali Yuga, the *Mahābhārata* does make the correlations—albeit inconsistently.[13] It is important to register that the *Mahābhārata* refers to these *yuga*-junctures while introducing itself generically as *itihāsa*, "history," doing so at its beginning in both cases: for Rāma Jāmadagnya at the Tretā-to-Dvāpara juncture (*Mbh* 1.2.3) and for the *Mahābhārata* war at the Dvāpara-to-Kali juncture (1.2.9). What is striking is that the *YP* shifts from past to future tense right with the *Mahābhārata* war (Mitchiner 1986, 35, 50), making that war and the end of the Dvāpara *yuga* a prophesy no less than the whole course of the Kali *yuga* that follows it. Keeping in mind that Mitchiner brings up these matters under what he calls the *YP*'s "main aim,"[14] I will now begin to talk about the *telos* of that text. According to Mitchiner, the *YP* is "selective" in two ways.

First, it does not give complete genealogies: that is, it is not focused on an epic's dynasty. Mitchiner thinks this would reflect a "fairly early stage in the formulation of the Epic and Purāṇic genealogical tradition, which was only subsequently developed into the presentation of complete genealogical lists. The *Yuga-Purāṇa* has clearly not derived its account . . . from any other extant literary sources or from the main Epic and Purāṇic tradition" (1986, 50). Yes and no. As Mitchiner wants to maintain here, the *YP* shows unique and original features in the events and personages it mentions. But his idea that it would reflect an "early stage" of the epico-purāṇic genealogical tradition is untenable. It simply lacks a genealogical telos. More than this, von Stietencron shows that the genealogies introduced in the royal genealogical section of the Purāṇas, the *vaṃśānucarita*, were probably first redacted in the period of the Nandas, with the section on future dynasties, called the *Bhaviṣya(t) Purāṇa*, then added during the early Mauryan period (2005, 69–85). Such lists of kings (von Stietencron calls them "complete genealogical lists," but that is more doubtful) would thus be earlier than both the *YP* and the epics.

12. He says "both in the Epics . . . and throughout the Purāṇas" (1986, 50), implying that these texts would develop their accounts after the *YP*. I will, however, be arguing that the *YP* cannot be earlier than the *Mahābhārata*. As to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Mitchiner says, interestingly, that the *YP* ignores "the entire *Ramayaṇa* tradition" (1986, 45).

13. The *Nārāyaṇīya* makes a different correlation for Rāma. When Nārāyaṇa describes his Prādurbhāvas, he says, "When the twilight of Tretā and Dvāpara has arrived, having become Rāma Dāśarathi, I will become the lord of the universe (*bhaviṣyāmi jagatpati*)" (12.326.78). I would attribute the *YP*'s ignoring of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (see previous note) to a lack of interest in its geography and its being *kāvya* rather than "history."

14. One would like to know how and whether this aim is related to the aim of the *Gārgya-jyotiṣa*.

The second area of selectivity gets us to some of the ways the *YP* shows unique and original features, including the futurity of the *Mahābhārata*. Says Mitchiner, it is neither "a complete" nor "fully consecutive catalogue of events and characters, but rather presents . . . certain select and prominent occurrences: it is therefore impossible to reconstruct, from this account alone, anything more than an outline chronology for the people and events described" (1986, 50–51). Mitchiner is speaking here mainly about what the *YP* presents as late "people and events" of the Kali Yuga, which I will get to shortly. The only outline chronology it is really interested in, however, is that of the four *yugas*, and mainly, beginning with the *Mahābhārata*, in the future, as prophesy.

A.1. The Yuga Purāṇa *and* Yugas *in the* Mahābhārata

Now Mitchiner maintains that the *YP* would be "probably the earliest account of the Yugas in Indian literature" (1986, vii; cf. 35), but on this point his explanation is unconvincing. For Mitchiner, the *YP*'s "phrasing" of "its accounts of the *Mahābhārata* war and the reign of Janamejaya Parīkṣit also in the future tense . . . suggests" that its "account was composed before such a convention of the precise dividing-point between past and future time became widely established" (35). Dividing lines between past and future, however, are more flexible than the one between the Dvāpara and Kali Yuga, on which the *YP* simply follows the *Mahābhārata*. Indeed, so does the *vaṃśānucarita*, once the *Bhaviṣya(t) Purāṇa* begins the future during the reign of the Pāṇḍava descendant Adhisīmakṛṣṇa (see below). The *Mahābhārata* probably establishes the flexibility of this convention when Mārkaṇḍeya shifts to the future tense to describe the end of the Kali Yuga.[15] Moreover, Mitchiner simply overlooks that *YP* verses 28–39 are a kind of futuristic *Mahābhārata* digest, and clearly show that some kind of *Mahābhārata*—almost certainly one with *yugas*—is older than the *YP*:[16]

> 28. And at the end of that Yuga, the earth will go to destruction; men, having come under the control of Time, will cook [for] their own bodies (*tasyāpi ca yugasyāṃte medavī kṣayameṣyati/ narāspacaṃti svāndehān kālasya vaśamāgatāḥ*).

15. *Mbh* 3.188.10 ff. See Hiltebeitel 2005*b*, 125 n. 41.

16. Cf. González-Reimann 2002, 142–43, maintaining that "a text like the *Yuga Purāṇa*" could have worked out the *Mahābhārata*'s *yuga* chronology before the epic did so itself, and that the epic "only later incorporated" it. Yet he acknowledges that the "exact relationship" between the *YP* and the epic is "difficult to ascertain."

29. Keśava (Viṣṇu) will arise at the end of the Dvāpara, in order to destroy horses and elephants, princes, and men (*hayānām ca gajānaṃ ca pārthivānāṃ nṛṇāṃ tathā/ vadhārtham dvāparasyāṃte samutpatsyati keśavaḥ*).

30. [he will be] four-armed, of great valour, bearing the conch, disc, and mace: [and he will be] called Vāsudeva, the strong one, dressed in yellow clothes (*caturbāhurmahavīryaḥ śaṃkhacakra-gadādharaḥ/vāsudeva iti khyātaḥ pītāṃbaradharo balī*).

31. Then, resembling Kailāsa, wearing a garland of flowers [and] bearing the plough as weapon, there will arise Yudhiṣṭhira[17]—the excellent king of the Pāṇḍavas—for the purpose of slaughter at the end of the Dvāpara, together with [his] four brothers (*tataḥ kailāsasaṃkāśo vanamali halāyudhaḥ/ pāṇḍavānāṃ varo rājā bhaviṣyati yudhiṣṭhiraḥ/ vadhārthaṃ dvāparasyāṃte caturbhir bhrātṛbhir saha*).

32. [namely] both Bhīmasena the son of Vāyu, and Phalguna of severe *tapas*, and the two brothers, Nakula and Sahadeva, born of the Aśvins (*vāyavyo bhīmasenaśca phālgunaśca mahātapāḥ/ nakulaḥ sahadevaśca bhrātarāv-aśvinātmajau*).

33. Also Bhīṣma, Droṇa and others, and the prince Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Karṇa, the king of Aṅga, together with Aśvatthāman the invincible (*bhīṣmadroṇādayaścaiva dhṛṣṭadyumnaśca pārthivaḥ/ aṅgarājastathā karṇaḥ sāśvatthāmā ca durjayaḥ*).

34. Devaka and Śatadhanvan, and Dāruka the illustrious—they will arise at the end of the Yuga, in order to protect the world of men (*devakaḥ śatadhanvā ca dārukasya mahāyaśaḥ/ rakṣārthaṃ naralokasya utpatsyaṃti yugakṣaye*).

35. So too Śakuni and Dantavaktra, and Śiśupāla the haughty: together with Śalya, Rukmi, Jarāsaṃdha, Kṛtavarman [and] Jayadratha (*śakunir-daṃtavaktraśca śiśupālaśca garvitaḥ/ śalyo rukmir-jarāsaṃdhaḥ kṛtavarmā jayadrathaḥ*).

36. The cause [of strife] of these might[y] kings will be Kṛṣṇā, the daughter of Drupada: [and] the earth will go[18] to her destruction (*eteṣāmapi vīrāṇāṃ rājñāṃ heturbhaviṣyati/ drupadasya sutā kṛṣṇā dehāṃtaragatā mahī*).

37. Then, when the destruction of men has occurred and the circle of kings has ended, there will be the fourth [and] final Yuga

17. As Mitchiner 1986, 46, 90 n. 19 indicates, Yudhisṭhira's description seems to be borrowed from Balarāma.

18. Mitchiner 1986, 90 n. 20: lit "went."

called Kali (*tato narakṣaye vṛtte praśāṃte nṛpamaṇḍale/ bhaviṣyati kalirnāma caturthaṃ paścimaṃ yugaṃ*).

38. Then at the start of the Kali Yuga, Janamejaya Pārīkṣit will be born, illustrious and celebrated on the earth—there is no doubt (*tataḥ kaliyugasyādau pārīkṣij-janamejayaḥ/ pṛthivyāṃ prathitaḥ śrīmānutpatsyati na saṃśayaḥ*).

39. And that king will cause a quarrel with the twice-born:[19] his anger for his insulted wife having come under the power of time (*so 'pi rājā dvijaiḥ sārdhaṃ virodham upadhāsyati/ dāraviprakṛtāmarṣaḥ kālasya vaśamāgataḥ*). (Mitchiner 1986, 90, xi–xv text)

It will be noted that the *YP* describes a somewhat rough-edged *Mahābhārata* that may reflect popular or "purāṇic" conceptions of it. For instance, the faulting of the war to Draupadī-Kṛṣṇā in *śloka* 36 could remind one of the way the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*—perhaps as recently as the nineteenth century—reworked the medieval Hindi oral epic *Ālhā*. Reflecting north Indian Rājpūt perceptions, the *Ālhā* makes Draupadī the root cause of its "*Mahābhārata* of the Kali Yuga" since she took rebirth as its heroine Belā so that she could more fully satisfy her lust for blood (Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, 432–33, 494–511). The possibility that proto-Rājpūt sensibilities might lie behind the *YP* will be worth holding in mind. Yet more immediately, *ślokas* 31, 34–35 and 39 suggest that the *YP* author knows something of the *Mahābhārata*'s "Appendix," the *Harivaṃśa*. The description of Yudhiṣṭhira with traits of Balarāma in verse 31 (see n. 17) suggests a heightened familiarity with Balarāma that could derive from that text. The names cited in verses 34–35 to describe those who arise at the end of the Yuga concentrate on enemies more of Kṛṣṇa than of the Pāṇḍavas, and Dantavaktra and Śatadhanvan in particular are far more prominent in the *Harivaṃśa* than they are in the *Mahābhārata*.[20] One might think of relating these characteristics

19. See Mitchiner 1986, 51–52 on Janamejaya (*śl* 37–39): the *YP* could know a *Mahābhārata* story of his killing a Brahmin and regaining favor after an Aśvamedha. See Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 786 n. to *Mbh* 12.146.3, joining attempts to explain away Yudhiṣṭhira's hearing from Bhīṣma about their as-yet-unborn descendents Parikṣit and Janamejaya (called "Bhārata" [147.20d]). Fitzgerald thinks it is "more likely . . . the story originated apart from the *MBh* . . . and was inserted . . . relatively late. The entire [*Āpaddharma*] seems to be significantly later than at least the first thirty-five chapters of . . . the *rājadharma*." Cf. Bowles 2007, 316–18, favoring "narrative recursiveness" here. In any case, the *YP* is not referring to this *Mbh* story but one in the *HV*, to be discussed below and in chapter 12.

20. The *Mahābhārata* mentions only Dantavaktra, as an incarnate Krodhavaśa demon (1.61.57–61) and ally of Jarāsaṃdha (2.13.12).On Dantavaktra in the *Harivaṃśa*, see *HV* 80–82 (Dantavaktra, Śatadhanvan, Śiśupāla, and many others including Duryodhana join Jarāsaṃdha's attack on Mathurā); 87.26–61 (he goes with Jarāsaṃdha, Śiśupāla, and Pauṇḍra Vāsudeva to Vidarbha for Rukmiṇī's wedding with Śiśupāla, and when Kṛṣṇa abducts the bride, he is among those who attack him); on Śatadhanvan king of the Kārūṣas, see also *HV* 18.15; 29.2–19; 98.5. Purāṇic accounts then make Dantavaktra a brother of Śiśupāla. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, his slaying by Kṛṣṇa forms a pair with that of Śiśupāla. Upon each of their deaths, a ray of light departs from them and enters Kṛṣṇa (*BhāgPur* 10.74.45; 78.10). He and Śiśupāla thus join the brother-pairs

to what Mitchiner calls the "hybrid" features of the *YP*'s Sanskrit (1986, 20–36), but verse 39 also strengthens the case that the *YP* is in particular referencing the *Harivaṃśa text*. The allusion in this last verse to a story about Janamejaya's anger over an insult to his wife certainly refers to a scene at the very end of the *Harivaṃśa*. This distinctive story, which occurs in conjunction with a prophesy that Vyāsa makes about near and distant events in the Kali *yuga*, tells that Janamejaya blamed his priests for allowing an insult to his wife when she was fulfilling her duties as queen to simulate sexual union with the slain horse during Janamejaya's Aśvamedha sacrifice, and Indra entered the horse's body so that he could have intercourse with her.[21] In completing three verses that zero in on the beginning of the Kali Yuga in the reign of the Pāṇḍavas' descendant Janamejaya, verse 39 gives the impression of rounding off the *YP*'s digest of the "epic" by settling us into Kali age as the basis for turning immediately to other later "future" events within it. I will return to this closing *Harivaṃśa* sequence involving Janamejaya's wife and Vyāsa's prophesies in chapter 12 § A, so for the moment let us just note two things. First, we will find in this chapter that bits of the future history that Vyāsa foresees will help us to contextualize some historical allusions in the *YP*. Second, if the *YP* dates from anywhere near the late first century BCE, its *Harivaṃśa* references could be evidence of a much earlier date for that text than is usually estimated. But leaving these points for later discussion, our question for now is: why would the *YP* innovate by placing the *Mahābhārata* war (and it's *Harivaṃśa* aftermath) in the future?

All we need to know for a reasonable answer this question is that the *YP* is part of an astrological text and that its frame story makes the whole unit a narrative by Śiva to his son Skanda, the general of the Gods. The shift shows the power of this text to predict the *Mahābhārata* astronomically, not its priority to the *Mahābhārata*. Śiva, as it were, scoops Mārkaṇḍeya and Vyāsa (who shows a prophetic side not only in the *Harivaṃśa*)[22] to foretell the *Mahābhārata* as the entrée

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Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyākṣa and Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa in being incarnations of Viṣṇu's doorkeepers Jaya and Vijaya, who turned away a visitation of youthful-seeming Ṛṣis (led by Sanaka Ṛṣi) to Viṣṇu's heavenly palace, and upon being cursed to take on three lives each as pairs of demon brothers, chose to be reborn as great enemies who would remember Viṣṇu when he slew them in his *avatāras* (*BhāgPur* 3.15.12–36; 7.1–2). *HV* 24.21–22 knows Śiśupāla as an incarnation of Hiraṇyakaśipu and mentions Dantavaktra after him genealogically; but the *HV* does not know the latter as an incarnation of Hiraṇyākṣa, or either of them as a Krodhavaśa demon.

21. Mitchiner (1986, 51) cites *Harivaṃśa* 118.11–39. On epic sensitivities concerning such Aśvamedha scenes, see chapter 8 §§ E and G); Hiltebeitel 2011*a*, chapter 9; forthcoming-*c*. In the *Mahābhārata*, before Janamejaya is instructed to perform an Aśvamedha, he is given the option of what amounts to an archaic *yātsattra* by which he would traverse the Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī Rivers (*Mbh* 12.148.10–13).

22. See chapter 6 § B on his obtaining knowledge of the three times at White Island, and *Mbh* 1.119.6–8, his parting words to his mother, who will go off with the two sisters with whom, at her bidding, he sired the Kauravas' and Pāṇḍavas' fathers: "The times of happiness are past and times of trouble lie ahead. The days grow worse every new tomorrow, earth herself is aging. A dreadful time is at hand. . ." (van Buitenen 1973, 64).

to the Kali Yuga, which from its beginning thus becomes a somewhat redemptive tale. Indeed, Śiva does not fail to begin this twelve-verse *Mahābhārata-Harivaṃśa* digest by describing Kṛṣṇa in "Vaiṣṇava" terms (Kṛṣṇa has four arms, three of his conventional emblems, and the name Vāsudeva)[23] as the guiding hand behind the *Mahābhārata* war, thus ruling out any possibility of taking the *YP* to be asserting a sectarian slant on the epic, and, more important, considering the likely early date of the *YP*, demonstrating that Kṛṣṇa's redemptive role in the transition between the *yugas* would be known to the *YP* from the *Mahābhārata* itself.

From here, the *YP* shows its teleological hand by moving directly from its prophesy of the *Mahābhārata* (cum *Harivaṃśa*) to more recent persons and events of the late Kali Yuga. After the twelve verses on the *Mahābhārata* and King Janamejaya, the next personage, mentioned immediately, is the Magadha king Udāyin, of the pre-Nanda Śiśunāgas, and his founding of the new Magadha capital at Paṭaliputra (*śl* 40–43)![24] The telos of the *YP* will thus lie in Śiva's predictions connecting the *Mahābhārata* with certain persons, events, *and places* of the late Kali Yuga.

Now as I have already mentioned, Mitchiner argues that the *YP* was probably composed not in Magadha but in Ujjain. I believe he is right to argue that it features a northwestern/north-central Indian perspective rather than what we can now call a Greater Magadhan northeastern one, which makes it interesting to compare with Vyāsa's prophesy at the end of the *Harivaṃśa*, which, like the *YP*, is offered from a north-central perspective, and with the Greater Magadhan outlook of the *vamśānucarita* and its *Bhaviṣya(t) Purāṇa*. Actually, the *YP* prognosticates about three broad regions, which we may call Greater Magadha, the Northern Midlands (for what I have just called the northwestern/north-central area), and the Deccan or South—including the Kāverī River basin (1986, 75–79 with map facing 78). As already indicated, the *YP* sketches out its program highly selectively, mentioning events and personages found nowhere else in the historical record: among them, its unusual interest among Indian texts in giving details on the Indo-Greeks in India.[25] I limit myself to two featured themes: (*a*) the way the *YP* links its singular account of the Indo-Greeks

23. See *śl* 30 above. Mitchiner observes the sectarian tone of these two verses on Kṛṣṇa, but correctly observes that with its overall narration by Śiva, the *YP* "has no strong sectarian bias" (1986, 46–47).

24. The *Bhaviṣya(t) Purāṇa* traces Magadha expansionism to Udāyin. See Mitchiner 1986, 52–53: Udāyin, who bears epithet *śiśunāgātmaja*, was perhaps the successor of Ajātaśatru, whom Mitchiner dates to ca. 460 BCE; "for the author of the *Yuga-Purāṇa*," the founding "constituted a major event in the Kali Yuga."

25. Mitchiner 1986, 3, cited above, attempts to tie in these events with Greek presences in central and eastern India in inscriptions and with the history of Demetrios and Khāravela (55–58). Fitzgerald 2010 convincingly dates Khāravela later than Mitchiner and an old consensus, promoting him to "the middle of the first c. BCE," but he makes a rather fantastic attempt to imagine this Jaina Cedi king "or a clansman" to have had a "possible role in sponsoring the *Mahābhārata*" (109 and n. 14). Khāravela ruled from Kaliṅga (Orissa), on which the *Mbh* has many negative things to say (see Salomon 1978; Biardeau 2002, 1: 298; 2: 54, 756–57; Hiltebeitel 2005*b*, 118–21).

with what I will be calling Puṣyamitra's Northern Midlands Alliance; and (*b*) the *YP's* peculiar notion of safe havens in the south. Be it noted that the *YP* interprets both these themes redemptively: after *adharmic* rule makes way for the Greek and Śaka invasions, both incursions, says Śiva, will have redemptive outcomes, which will include the invaders going back home.

A.2. The Greek Incursion and the Northern Midlands Alliance

The first incursion, then, is by the Greeks into Paṭaliputra. From Udāyin's founding of that Magadhan capital, the *YP* turns immediately to a late Mauryan king there named Śāliśūka (Mitchiner dates his ascent to about 205 BCE), whose *adharmic* rule (*śl* 44–46; 1986, 91) sets the stage. The *YP* disparages Śāliśūka as "an oppressor of his own kingdom" (*śl* 45), and Mitchiner takes him to display the non-Brahmanical preferences of the late Mauryas.[26] As Mitchiner says, it is not necessarily a continuous chronology from Śāliśūka to the Yavana incursion, but since the account goes on to speak of Śuṅga kings, it would appear that the incursion would not be much later than Śāliśūka. We now meet our Northern Midlands Alliance of Greek, Mathurā, and Pañcāla forces, which pass through Sāketa (Ayodhyā) on the way to Paṭaliputra, where they tear down the fort and leave the lands desolate. After this, however, the Yavanas do not remain in "Madhyadeśa,"[27] as war will break out in their own realm (1986, 55–58; *śl* 47–48, 56–57; 91–92). Such a Yavana incursion in alliance with Pañcāla and Mathurā after the adharmic rule of Śāliśūka is, according to Mitchiner, most conceivable "around 190 B.C.E.: a period which saw . . . the secession of Sogdiana in the Indo-Greek realm, which would doubtless have prompted the return of any Indo-Greek expeditionary force to their own realm [in Bactria];[28] and a period which also witnessed the final downfall of the Mauryas and the emergence of the new Śuṅga dynasty under Puṣyamitra in India" in ca. 187 (1986, 58). Such a course of events may find corroboration in the recent discovery that a Greek era was dated back to 186/85 BCE.[29]

26. Purāṇic sources list him as a successor of Aśoka who could have ascended "shortly before 200 BC." Cf. Thapar 1997, 183, 191, taking him from purāṇic sources to be the fourth-to-last Maurya, and of a bad reputation also in the *Gārgasaṃhitā*. The *YP*'s last word on him is that "he will, in delusion, cause his oldest brother to establish a righteous [person] called Vijaya (*vijayaṃ nāma dhārmikam*." (*śl* 46), which Mitchiner says may be a negative-ironic twist on Aśoka's *dharmavijaya* or "conquest through righteousness" (1986, 52–55, 91 and n. 26). Proposing another interpretation linked with Jainism, see Bhattacharya 2008.

27. See Mitchiner 1986, 56: " 'Madhyadeśa' seems to be intended here in the sense found also in Buddhist works, denoting the region up to or beyond Kajaṅgala" (in southeast Bihar, "and even Puṇḍra." Cf. 92 n. 33; Rhys Davids 1904; Bronkhorst 2007, 1–4.

28. Mitchiner narrows this down from a starting period of ca. 205–190 during the overlapping reigns of Euthydemos and Demetrios as co-regents in Bactria, and the span from ca. 190–171 when Demetrios became supreme ruler.

29. I thank Jason Neelis for making this point (personal communication, 2008). On the inscriptional evidence for this Indo-Greek era, see Salomon 2005, 2007, 268; Bracey 2005; Neelis 2007, 70 n. 63.

As we shall see in chapter 12, Vyāsa's prophesy at the end of the *Harivaṃśa* may allude to the overthrow of the last Maurya, Bṛhadratha, by his Brahmin general Puṣyamitra Śuṅga,. The *YP*, as we shall see, seems to name Puṣyamitra by another name, but without reference to these events and only as one of four kings who rules at Paṭaliputra (Mitchiner 1986, 63). Bronkhorst associates the *YP*'s account of the Greeks' part in this invasion with the way some other sources represent them as provoking fear, or as a threat to the order of Brahmanical society (2007, 359). But note Śiva's emphasis on their retreat. In any case, Mitchiner shows a way to read these events as background to what I am calling the text's redemptive pattern. Says Mitchiner, "the confusion wrought by the advent of a joint Yavana-Pañcāla-Māthura force may have provided the opportunity for Puṣyamitra to overthrow the last Maurya king and establish his own dynasty. . . . [T]o judge from [Puṣyamitra's] name, it is quite possible that he himself may have come from the then Maurya domains of Pañcāla or Mathurā, where many of the subsequent "Mitra" kings are known to have ruled" (1986, 58–59). Mitchiner goes on to enrich this hypothesis with a plot:

> Seen in this light, therefore, we may suppose that the Pañcālas and Māthuras—seeking to hasten the fall of a rapidly weakening Maurya empire and to establish their own independence [which, as shall be mentioned, they achieved in their independent minting of coins]—enlisted the help of a Yavana contingent and proceeded to the Maurya capital to sound the death-knell of that dynasty. If the "Mitra" Puṣyamitra was indeed of Pañcāla or Māthura origin, the advent of this force—comprised of many of his compatriots—would have provided him with an ideal opportunity to dispose of his Maurya master and to have himself proclaimed as ruler. (Mitchiner 1986, 59; my insertion)

Mitchiner goes on to propose that the seven kings of Sāketa, whom the *YP* mentions next without names or details (*śl* 58–59), serve not only to take us down to the conditions that presage the next invasion by the Śakas but might include descendants of Puṣyamitra as rulers of Kosala, which bordered on Pañcāla (1986, 59). Whatever we make of Mitchiner's historical reconstruction, we are left with the question of why the *YP* features a Yavana–Pañcāla–Mathurā coalition in a destruction of the Magadha capital, to which Mitchiner's solution offers a cogent answer. Along the same lines, why, as was mentioned in chapter 5, should *Manu* 7.193 prescribe that a king, who is given no particular location for his capital, be urged to deploy soldiers "from the lands of the Kurus, Matsyas, Pañcālas, and Śūrasenas" on his front lines when he goes to battle? With the

Śūrasenas being from Mathurā, it is much the same population. *Manu*'s recommendation would likely reflect that these lands yield loyal soldiers from the Midlands, as they are said to have done in the *Mahābhārata* war. And indeed, before that war, and especially as prelude to it in the *Harivaṃśa*, it is a Mathurā–Kuru coalition (displaced, in that Kṛṣṇa has left Mathurā for Dvārakā) that devises the elimination of King Jarāsaṃdha of Magadha so that Yudhiṣṭhira Pāṇḍava can undertake a Royal Consecration (Rājasūya) ceremony, as will be discussed in chapter 13.

Now if the *YP* does not mention Puṣyamitra Śuṅga in connection with the overthrow of the Mauryas, it probably does refer to him under the name of Puṣpaka—identifying him as the cofounder and then sole ruler of the kings called Agniveśyas (Mitchiner 1986, 3, 75, 93 śl 71–72)—that is, Śuṇga kings[30] whom Mitchiner also calls the "the 'Mitra' kings" with reference to their coinage. Not known by either name from other sources, they are said to have ruled prosperously at least for a while in Paṭaliputra (a.k.a. Puṣpapura), and also elsewhere. Attention thus switches to a land called Bhadrayaka or Bhadrapaka, otherwise unknown, where Agnimitra, possibly as a Śuṅga viceroy,[31] and Agniveśya, probably another Śuṅga, may have ruled. Agniveśya is said to have fought the Savaras (today's Saoras, a tribal population) there, which would suggest the Vindhyas (Mitchiner 1986, 62–63).

Looking at coins found from the Śuṅga period, Mitchiner remarks on the rise of dynasties across northern India that issued anonymous silver and copper punch-marked coins first from Paṭaliputra, then briefly at Mathurā, and subsequently from mints in Vidiśā, Ujjain, and Eran. In these circumstances, the central areas of Mathurā, Pañcāla, Kosala, and Kauśāmbī (capital of Vatsa) take prominence, while "in western India and the Panjab, a number of small states and tribes asserted their independence and issued coins," including the Kurus, Pūrus, Vṛṣṇis, and Yaudheyas. But there were also coins of "further 'Mitra' kings—including Indramitra" found at Paṭaliputra (1986, 63–64). With these so-called Agniveśya or "'Mitra' kings," we thus find a proliferation of "little kingdoms," reminding us how that ideal has flourished over the centuries in

30. *Śl* 61, 70c–81. Says Mitchiner (1986, 62), the "name is apparently given to both the dynasty as a whole (*śloka* 62) and also to one of its prominent members, who is nonetheless not its founder (*ślokas* 79–80)." It is, however, not clear that the name pertains to the whole line. The uncertainty of the chronology is compounded by the mention before this (*śl* 60 and 65–70b) of a low-born ruler named Āmrāṭa, who takes over Paṭaliputra after an uprising. Mitchiner suggests he may be Khāravela (1986, 60–62), on whom see Fitzgerald 2010 and n 25 above.

31. Agnimitra falls in love with a beauty of the land in Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra*, where he is Puṣyamitra's viceroy in Vidiśa, after being a coruler with him at the beginning of his reign (Mitchiner 1986, 63). Mitchiner cites an astronomical feature of his description in the *YP* that may date his Vidiśā viceroyalty's beginning to 183 BCE (66).

Indian martial culture, and interestingly—given the early names Agnimitra and Agniveśya—flourished under the name and mythology of Agnikula or Agnivaṃśa Kṣatriyas or Rājpūts, who are celebrated in the Hindi *Ālhā* and suppressed in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*'s revision of that oral epic story. That is, Agnikula and Agnivaṃśa are terms used for kings, some of them of Brahmin extraction, who do not trace their descent in the Lunar or Solar dynasties made normative in the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, respectively (see Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, 211–363, 439–75; 1999*b*). This would reinforce our earlier point that the *YP* could reflect early "proto-Rājpūt" sensibilities. One feature of the *YP*'s redemptive history could thus be called the little kingdomization of Paṭaliputra as preferable to rule there by the imperial Nandas or Mauryas. In the post-Maurya period and before the rise of the Śaka Kṣatrapas (Satraps) and Kuṣāṇas, the Mitras were little kings, the biggest being Puṣyamitra. Says Mitchiner, "We might even go so far as to suggest that Puṣyamitra was instrumental in establishing certain viceroys or regents in such regions as Kosala, Pañcāla and Mathurā who—or whose successors—thereafter asserted their own independence." The Śuṅgas quickly lost power in northern India,[32] the focus of power shifting to "Malwa, centered on the three cities of Vidiśā, Eran and Ujjain"—where Mitchiner posits that the *YP* would have been written (65).

Meanwhile, in around 110 BCE and close to Vidiśā, something of the Śuṅga period alliance with the Greeks could still have inspired the Indo-Greek ambassador Heliodorus to inscribe his Vaiṣṇava sentiments on the famous Besnagar Garuḍa Pillar in a *śloka* verse similar to one in the *Mahābhārata* (see Brockington 1998, 134; Witzel 2005, 62, 64, 66).

A.3. The Śaka Invasion and the Southern Safe Havens

It must be admitted that to call this amorcellization of kingship redemptive is to play into a dead-end historiography. It may be better than life under the Nandas or Mauryas, but it is going nowhere. In contrast to the *YP*'s redeptive interpretation of the foregoing history, Vyāsa's prophesy at the end of the *Harivaṃśa* looks at this same period more somberly: "When the age is declining (*yuge kṣīṇe*), there will be great war, great tumult, grain rain, great fear" (*HV* 117.14a-c). In these conditions, there will be migrations away from this north central heartland to all regions but the deep south: "Assailed with fear and hunger, and carrying

32. See Härtel 2007, 346, finding it "amply clear that the Śuṅgas did not inherit the Mauryan empire in its entirety; various small principalities had cropped up in the various parts of the Mauryan empire along with the coup d'etat of Puṣyamitra or soon after it." "The majority of historians agree on dating the beginning of the Local States of Northern India to the second or later half of the second century B.C., taking for granted the disintegration of the Śuṅga empire soon after Puṣyamitra."

their sons on their shoulders, men will cross the Kauśikī River and seek shelter [east] among Aṅgas, Vaṅgas, Kaliṅgas, [northwest among] Kāśmīras, [in the Vindhyas among] Mekalās, and among those of Ṛṣikāntagiri [uncertain]. Men will dwell together with hosts of Mlecchas on whole flanks of the Himalaya, on the shore of the saltwater ocean, and in forests" (117.28–30). In the *YP*, however, the basic redemptive pattern repeats itself. Following an interlude on evil conduct of men and women, another bad ruler, King Satuvara (*śl* 87)—Mitchiner thinks he is probably Śātavāhana or one of the early Śātavāhana kings (1986, 66–67)—rules for ten years to set the stage for the Śaka invasion, which is mentioned in the next verses (*śl* 88–89), though it is also mentioned earlier (*śl* 62–64). This discontinuous chronology would take us down to about 60 BCE. According to the *YP*, a Śaka king plunders and destroys until he is killed by a Kaliṅga king and a group of Sabalas, which for Mitchiner again suggests a Vindhya location, now close to Ujjain. Thereafter the Śakas, like the Greeks, return to their own city (1986, 68).

Although the Purāṇas do not mention any Śaka incursion, the story is related in the cycle that launches the Vikrama era, which was adopted by the Guptas and Cālukyas.[33] The *YP*'s redemptive predictions now draw to their climax with a description of what Mitchiner calls "Regions in Which Men Will Survive and Prosper" (1986, 75–76; *śl* 98–113). As he indicates, the area in question lies "between the Vindhyas and the river Krishna (modern western and central Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra), together with the southern part of the eastern Ghats in Orissa, and the area around the river Kāverī in Tamil Nadu" (75). As Mitchiner maps the locations (facing p. 78), he must set the Kāverī area apart, but all the rest are contiguous, and he takes them to imply a territory enjoying "renewed prosperity" under the Śātavāhana empire (75–76). Noting the *YP*'s prognostic emphasis, Mitchiner takes it that its author, who he says is "well acquainted on the one hand with various regions of northern India—which are mentioned in the context of the Kali Yuga," now mentions these "survival regions for the start of a new (Kṛta) Yuga" (79): "clearly linking his account of the Yugas to historical events," this author "believes that, shortly after the advent of the Śakas, the Kali Yuga had come to an end; and that after an interval of harsh conditions, a new Kṛta Yuga was beginning to dawn—an event which he evidently believed was occurring at his own time of writing" (82).[34] Mitchiner suggests that others in Ujjain would have shared this view and

33. Mitchiner 1986, 71; cf. 74–75 offering a "summarized reconstruction" of the expulsion of the Śakas from Ujjain, leading to the founding of the era. On the story cycle, see Brown 1933.

34. Cf. Mitchiner 1990, 321: After the Śakas' "relatively brief plundering foray," the *YP* "describes the end of the Kali Yuga and the dawn of a new Kṛta Yuga."

its "optimism" in around 25 BCE, and that this would "explain why the era of 58 B.C.—that was almost certainly founded by [the Indo-Scythian king] Azes[35]—came to be called the Kṛta Yuga when it was subsequently adopted by the inhabitants of Ujjain and Malwa" (82).

This credulity of the people of Ujjain twenty-five years before the common era might, however, strike us as rather contrived. The *YP* never makes it explicit that its closing events, involving what Mitchiner calls the "Regions in Which Men Will Survive and Prosper," have anything to do with the Kṛta *yuga*: a point acknowledged by González-Reimann, who nonetheless says that "the text implies that at that time, and in those places, a new Kṛta Yuga will commence" (2002, 99).[36] Mitchiner is also misleading when he says men will "prosper" in these regions due to what he calls "renewed prosperity" (75–76, 82) under the Śātavāhana empire. They are better named by González-Reimann, who calls them "safe havens" (2002, 99)—but in troubled times. Although as we shall see, the safe havens sequence repeatedly uses words for "the end of the *yuga*," it never uses the term Kṛta Yuga, and, I will argue, is not describing one as imminent or, much less, as a "realized eschatology." Here I must disagree not only with Mitchiner but with González-Reimann, who launches his own discussion of the *YP* with the comment that, "At some point in the last centuries B.C.E., and the early centuries C.E., there must have been real expectations that Kali would end in the foreseeable future" (2002, 97–98; cf. 144). I believe Mitchiner is again overstating his case to argue for the priority of the *YP*'s *yuga* skein to that of the *Mahābhārata*. Mitchiner attempts to make capital of the fact that the *YP* does not mention the myth of Kalki, and takes the *Mahābhārata*'s prophetic account of that myth by Mārkaṇḍeya—in which Mitchiner finds similarities to the *YP* account, and one identical line, half of which we can basically find as well in Vyāsa's closing prophesy in the *Harivaṃśa*[37]—to be

35. The equation of the Azes and Vikrama eras is disputed in Bracey 2005, based on an inscription dated in two eras: a Greek and Azes era; he concludes: "The Azes era cannot be dated later than 30 BC or earlier than 80 BC." Cf. Cribb 2005. See also González-Reimann 2002, 99; Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, 263–64: a probably fictional Vikramāditya is credited with founding an era in 58 or 57 BCE that may have Scytho-Parthian origins in eastern Iran. Śālivāhana, linked with the Śaka era that seems actually to mark the beginning of Kuṣāṇa rule in 78 CE, is probably a personification of the Śātavāhanas (based in Paithan on the Godavari near Aurangabad in Maharashtra, but with origins in Andhra and north Kanara). He seems to draw his profile especially from the first dynast Simuka-Śātavāhana (mid-first-century BCE) and Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi (ca. 106–30 CE) who defeated a branch of Śakas.

36. See similarly Bhattacharya 2008: The *YP* "is the only text to speak of 12 regions (*maṇḍalas*) that are peopled after the end of the yuga. It is unique in not terming these survivors as *mlecchas*." Bhattacharya misses the point that these havens would be above all for Brahmins.

37. Mitchiner 1986, 38: *YP śl* 55ab = *Mbh* 3.186.33cd: *bhovādinas tathā śūdrā brāhmaṇāś cāryavadinaḥ*. Van Buitinen 1975, 587 translates, "The serfs will say 'Hey you!', the brahmins will say 'Pray sir!' " It looks to be simply proverbial. Mitchiner says the *Mahābhārata* borrows this line (42). But why just a line? *HV* 116.13cd has (*śūdrā bhovādinaś caiva bhaviṣyanti yugakṣaye*).

later.[38] But an omission is not a sufficient reason to date one text before the other. We are, in other words, back to the question of the redemptive telos of the *YP*, which obviously—to begin with—simply differs from that in the *Mahābhārata*'s Kalki myth, and also from the one in Vyāsa's Kali *yuga* prophesy at the end of the *Harivaṃśa*, both of which *do* take us into a new Kṛta *yuga*, and, moreover, mention it (in Vyāsa's prophesy, it will occur when the Kali *yuga*'s evils begin to bottom out and *dharma*'s growth [*vṛddhi*] begins to avert its decline; *HV* 117.40–44). To appreciate the distinctiveness of the *YP*'s redemptive telos, we must consider how it uses the notion of "the end of the *yuga*" in relation to the account of the safe havens that closes Śiva's prophesy to Skanda.

The *YP* refers to "the end [or destruction] of the *yuga*" in its run-up to the description of the safe havens, first to describe the destructive situation: "there will be an end of the Yuga, the destruction of all living beings (*bhaviṣyati yugasyāntam sarvaprāṇivināśanaṃ*)" (Mitchiner 1986, 95, *śl* 91cd). There are then three successive verses that end in *yugakṣaye*, "at the end [or destruction] of the *yuga*," for those who will "remain" at that time. Although Mitchiner always translates *yugakṣaya* as "end of a *yuga*," the more literal translation is "destruction of a *yuga*," which I believe is the preferable translation for *YP* usages. Notions of *yuga* have an entitative aspect as something that has its own *dharma*, "remnants" (see below), connective dawns and twilight (in the *Mahābhārata*), and feet, suggesting a bull (in *Manu* 1.81–83; 8.16), and is felt more as an endangered continuum than as something really about to end (see Koskikallio 1994, 259–60, 267). At such a time, the good remainder will be persons of "calmness, patience and self-restraint" (*śamakṣamadamās*; *śl* 95c) and "those who maintain firmness" (*dhairyam*; *śl* 97c). But the wicked, those "dear to Kali who ever cause disbelief" (*nāstikyaṃ . . . kalipriyam*), will also remain at the destruction of the *yuga* (*yugakṣaye*) (*śl* 96). Such stock usages of "at the end [or destruction] of the yuga" for a bad time—what González-Reimann likes to call a "mere metaphor" (2002, 77)—are not sufficient to establish that a Kṛta Yuga follows.

The same compound, *yugakṣaye*, is then used at the end of the two transitional verses that describe the "creation" of the twelve safe havens (*dvādaśamaṇḍalaḥ*):

> 98. When the world has been afflicted with famine and has become a terrible fire, [then] from regard for the welfare of living beings, twelve

38. See Mitchiner 1986, 40–42, 44, adducing additionally that the *Mahābhārata* prefaces its Kalki account by speaking not of individual kings, as the *YP* does, but of peoples (3.186.30); the epic's citation of a *Vāyu Purāṇa* at 3.189.14 (see chapter 1 n. 25 on named purāṇas known by the *Mbh*); and that the *YP* account also omits any mention of an era of the Seven Ṛṣis, that is, a Manvantara. Bhattacharya 2008 follows Mitchiner on these points.

> regions were [i.e., will be] created (*durbhikṣābhyāhate loke agnibhūte sudaruṇe/ avekṣyarthaṃ* (var. *avakṣyārthaṃ*) *praṇiṇāṃ sṛṣṭā dvādaśamaṇḍalaḥ*).
>
> 99. The remnant in the world who are dear to *dharma*, those men who resort to *dharma*, they will remain at the end of the Yuga, wearied by hunger and thirst (*śeṣā dharmapriyā loke ye narā dharmasaṃśritāḥ/ kṣutpipāsapariśrāṃtāste sthāsyāṃti yugakṣaye*). (Mitchiner 1986, 96; xxxiv–xxxv)

When it comes now to describing the twelve havens themselves and the conditions under which this remnant of the good will survive, they are said to do so in four cases "at the end [destruction] of the yuga" (*yugakṣaye*; *śl* 102d; 103d; 104d; 113d)—in the last case, which summarizes for the whole, "in that terrible end [destruction] of the yuga" (*ghore tasminyugakṣaye*). Clearly none of the remnant is experiencing anything like a Kṛta Yuga. Indeed, although after mentioning that those who seek refuge, "longing for a better condition" in the first two havens, "will attain excellent happiness" (*sukhamuttamaṃ*) there (*śl* 101), the conditions elsewhere seem to be reminiscent of *āpaddharma*—that is, of topsy-turvy *dharma* for times of distress: in riverside, oceanside, mountainous, and forested regions, "men will live on fish and costly flesh" (102); elsewhere, ". . . through fish and birds" (107); ". . . on lotus fibres and lotus flowers" (111). And "on the banks of the Kāverī . . . men will have contentment there, through fish and boars" (106)! These are safe havens primarily for Brahmins. Indeed, as T. P. Mahadevan reminds me, supplying the following references, Tamil Sangam poetry depicts one poet, Kapilar, as a Brahmin who "feasts full on meat" that was "stewed" or "fried" (Hart 1975, 53; Hart and Heifitz 1999, 248–49).

I believe, then, that we must certainly rule out Mitchiner's interpretation that the *YP* ends with the author and the people of Ujjain enjoying "prosperity" and happily anticipating or experiencing the Kṛta Yuga. And with the rejection of that interpretation, we must also dismiss his argument that the account would be an earlier alternative to the *Mahābhārata*'s Kalki myth. There is nothing solid on which to base a claim that it is earlier than the Kalki myth. But more important, it is not an alternative to it,[39] and it is not evidence that the *YP* would be authoring "the earliest account of the Yugas in Indian literature" (1986, vii). But if the *YP* is not describing a pre-*Mahābhārata* account of the Kṛta Yuga, what is it describing and what are its models? I believe there are two possible answers, both of which would have *Mahābhārata* prefigurations.

39. Cf. González-Reimann 2002, 99, in agreement with Mitchiner that the Kalki myth is "probably a late adaptation or reformulation of ideas presented earlier in the *Yuga Purāṇa*, or some other external source."

The first explanation would draw on the *Mahābhārata* doctrine, also aired in *Manu* (9.301), that the king makes the *yuga*. This explanation could borrow a little from Mitchiner's view that the Śātavāhana empire had created "Regions in Which Men Will Survive and Prosper." But the explanation has obvious difficulties. Since no particular king is credited, the doctrine would have to be modified to say that "the empire makes the *yuga*." More than this, it is an account of safe havens in troubled times. Of course, to say a king creates the *yuga* is not to limit him, or an empire, to a Kṛta Yuga. But one does not hear much about kings who create Tretā or Dvāpara Yugas. For instance, when Kuntī warns her son Yudhiṣṭhira to prepare for war, she says a good king creates a Kṛta Yuga, lesser kings middling *yugas*, and a wicked king goes to hell (*Mbh* 5.130.14–19). Since in the *YP* it would be redundant to create a Kali Yuga, I think this explanation must be put back on the shelf.

The second explanation, however, is sound, and has a more well-developed *Mahābhārata* background, indeed, a myth. Rāma Jāmadagnya empties the earth of Kṣatriyas twenty-one times. But the job is never complete. Yudhiṣṭhira, who has heard the story once in the forest, hears it a second time after the war from Kṛṣṇa, who tells it to deter him from disavowing his hard-won kingdom.[40] In this account, the goddess Earth tells the Brahmin Kaśyapa she has made safe havens for the eventual regeneration of the Kṣatriya class, and implores Kaśyapa to reinstate them as kings to protect her. As Kṛṣṇa tells it (*Mbh* 12.49.66–75), neo-Kṣatriyas were raised in different forest, mountain, riverside, and oceanside[41] locations by bears, seers, cows, calves, monkeys, and the ocean (see Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, 460; Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 279–80). The *YP*, however, would be drawing on this myth to envision safe havens for Brahmins.[42] Similarly in Vyāsa's prophesy at the end of the *Harivaṃśa*, those who migrated out of the northern central midlands with sons on their shoulders and settled in new places, including mountains, oceansides, and forests, "will subsist on deer, fish, birds, dogs' feet (*śvāpadaiḥ*), all insects/worms (*sarvakiṭakaiḥ*), honey, vegetables, fruits, and roots," and will wear tree bark like Munis (*HV* 117.32–33).

40. At first, says Kṛṣṇa, Śūdras and Vaiśyas united with Brahmin women to produce a kingless condition in which the strong ruled the weak (12.49.61–62). The Southern Recension adds that Brahmins abandoned their *dharma* and turned to heresies (*pāṣaṇḍān*; 111* line 4 following 49.62).

41. I assume Ocean did its protecting by the oceanside. Some northern texts add that the ones thus protected lived among blacksmiths, goldsmiths, and such (*vyokāra-hemakārādi*; 75 and 114*).

42. Indeed, the Kalki myth would envision something similar, but *after* the intallation of the Kṛta yuga, where it describes the return of Brahmins to conquered territories; see chapter 12 § B.

A.4. Yugas, Yavanas, and Current Considerations

So far, I have argued that that the *Mahābhārata* and *Manu* are the texts that made the earliest Brahmanical formulations of *yugadharma*, doing so in a context where the *yuga*'s connections with the continuity of *dharma* over time would have cut a wedge that distinguished these formulations from Buddhist ones that traced *dharma*—or at least "the true *dharma*"—over time discontinuously through *kalpas*. As I have mentioned, von Stietencron's study of genealogies in the *vaṃśānucarita* (2005) brings in text-historical and geographical considerations about the Indian prehistory of this *yuga* theory that shed background light on both the *Mahābhārata* and the *YP*. For deeper background, I will suggest that we also think further about the *YP*'s Yavana–Pañcāla–Mathurā alliance.

Von Stietencron's interest lies in the *Bhaviṣya(t) Purāṇa* (henceforth *BhavP*) portion of the *vaṃśānucarita*, which "consists of a list of kings and sages from early times up to the fifth or seventh generation after the *Mahābhārata* war, written in the past tense; and a second [list] in the form of future [*bhaviṣya*] prophesies which continues the line of kings into the Kali age in various redactions until it is completed in the early Gupta era."[43] As noted, the prophesies occur in the *BhavP* portion, which von Stietencron distinguishes from what he calls the "literary framework," in which the Pāṇḍava descendant Adhisīmakṛṣṇa performs a sacrifice in the Naimiṣa Forest, where the *vaṃśānucarita* is recited. "What is certain," he says, "is that the redactors belonged to different regions. The focus of the earlier genealogies is the present-day Uttar Pradesh and the adjacent areas to the south and west" (2005, 78–79), and "indicative of the area of the *Kurupañcālas*" (73). "In contrast, in the *BhavP* portion the focus of the first and second redactions is Magadha" (78–79). Von Stietencron considers the *BhavP* portion to be the nucleus, that it would have been first redacted under conditions of "Brahmin restoration" (72), and that the best candidate is the early reign of Candragupta Maurya before he turned to Jainism (72)—one reason being its disapproval of the Nandas for overrunning "the old dynasties of North India" (79–80). In assigning the *BhavP* to the early reign of the first Mauryan, Candragupta, von Stietencron brings in what he calls "irrefutable evidence"—though it is "anything but obvious"—that this account already existed in Candragupta's time. Megasthenes reports that Indians listed 153 kings down to Candragupta (whom the Greeks called Sandracottus). The *BhavP* lists either 150 or 154, which, says von Stietencron, is too close to Megasthenes' number "to be a mere coincidence" (2005, 82–83).

43. Von Stietencron 2005, 65; cf. 73 and n. 12: as discussed in chapter 5 § C, *ĀpDhS* mentions a *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*.

Von Stietencron relates this dating to the *yuga* concept: "The collapse of the old Kṣatriya dynasties under the vigorous policies of Mahāpadmananda, who is explicitly denigrated as the son of a Śūdra (*śūdra-yoni*), the support extended by the rulers to non-Vedic religions and the invasions of barbarians—all this is seen negatively as a sign of *Kaliyuga*" (2005, 72). The *BhavP* section would, however, be narrativizing the past-to-"future" of such defeated royal lines "not for the purpose of reinstating them as independent regents—since the vast centralized empire had already proven its advantage—but in order to base the power wrested from the deposed Nandas on the co-operation of those very people who had suffered due to the former and hated them" (2005, 81). Yet as von Stietencron is quick to point out, "The *yuga* doctrine appears to be a relatively late insertion in the *Bhaviṣya(t) Purāṇa* and certainly postdates Mahāpadma Nanda due to whom the Kaliyuga grows in vigour (*vṛddhiṃ gamiṣyati*). If at all conceived by the first compiler of the Purāṇa at the time of this supposed Brahmanical restoration, its *yuga* calculations must have been based upon short time cycles which were not yet in conformity with the later teachings." He speaks here of "the later *yuga* concept" that starts the Kali Yuga "with the death of Kṛṣṇa"—which, as González-Reimann demonstrates (2002, 51–52, 60, 73, 94–97, 105, 115–16), is not formulated around that precise turning point until the Purāṇas.[44] Von Stietencron would be buttressed on this point by González-Reimann, who documents usages of *yuga* in the *Ṛgveda*, the Brāhmaṇas, and the *Jyotiṣa Vedāṅga* (which he dates ca. the fifth-century BCE) for time spans (a generation, a five-year cycle, "an age in general" [2002, 6–7, 16 n. 10]) that, as we have seen, are far shorter than those that come to be associated with the *yuga* in classical, including epic, usages.[45]

Von Stietencron also refines these chronological considerations about the two portions of the *vaṃśānucarita* in relation to geographical ones, calling attention to their handling of two different groups of kingdoms:

1. Those from Kosala to Avanti, "well documented in the *Bhaviṣya(t) Purāṇa*, . . . which were conquered by the Śiśunāgas and the Nandas, primarily under Mahānandin and Mahāpadma Nanda, and subsumed under the first great North Indian empire with its centre at Magadha," whose expansion would have begun with Udāyin, whom the *YP* mentions so prominently.

44. As von Stietencron remarks, "If this concept existed when the *Bhaviṣya(t) Purāṇa* was compiled, one would expect that kings from Parikṣit onwards would have all been listed as the future rulers of the Kali Age. This is not the case. Therefore, there almost certainly existed a *Bhaviṣya(t) Purāṇa* prior to this doctrine, a text which started six–eight generations after Parikṣit in the future tense and which remained unmodified in its kernel while being supplemented at its end. The later *yuga* doctrine is definitely in existence by the time of the final redaction in the early Gupta period" (2005, 73).

45. See González-Reimann 2002, 223–25 on use of *parvan* rather than *yuga* for dice throws in the *Ṣaḍviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*.

2. A list of "perfunctorily mentioned" dynasties originating "in another context," including Kurus, Aikṣvākus, Pañcālas, Kāśeyas, Kaliṅgas, and Śūrasenas, all belonging "to families found in the list of early dynasties, and whose absence in the *Bhaviṣya(t) Purāṇa* was bound to be conspicuous when a complete redaction of the *vaṃśānucarita* section was made. At the same time they are families which, in a favourable or unfavourable sense, are connected to the later Kali Yuga doctrine. . . . They perish in the Kaliyuga, are known opponents of Kṛṣṇa, or are supporters of the Bauddhas and Jains." (Von Stietencron 2005, 79–80)

Von Stietencron is "certain . . . that the redactors belonged to different regions. The focus of the earlier genealogies is the present-day Uttar Pradesh and the adjacent areas to the south and west. In contrast, in the *Bhaviṣya(t) Purāṇa* the focus of the first and second redactions is Magadha (Bihar); it is the Dekkhan when it comes to the third and fourth and, with the last redaction, it is once again Magadha" (2005, 78–79). On the other hand, the "literary framework" is "indicative of the area of the Kurupañcālas, as seen in the mention of the place of the prophecy as the Naimiṣa Forest" (73).

Yet perhaps we need not posit separate regions behind the *vaṃśānucarita*'s two sections. As the Naimiṣa Forest setting suggests, the *Mahābhārata* is a likely model for the belated "literary" framing of the *BhavP*. We may thus posit, at some point after the early reign of Candragupta Maurya, that familiarity with the *Mahābhārata* had intervened.

Now if, as I have further argued, the *YP* builds on the *Mahābhārata's* version of *yugadharma* as the basis for its ex eventu prophesies, and these prophesies yield information about the historical conditions under which this chronometry was generated, what are these conditions? Clearly, the *Mahābhārata* would have intervened at some time between an early Mauryan redaction of the *BhavP* and the late first-century BCE date that is likely for the *YP*. Although the *YP* ends up looking south, it, like the *Mahābhārata*, *Harivaṃśa*, and *Manu*, places most of its emphasis on northern India, and, like the *Mahābhārata* more specifically, as we shall see in chapter 13, on tensions between the northern midlands and Magadha as the hub of Greater Magadha. Von Stietencron shows that such tensions would be traceable to the early Mauryan period, and that if the early Mauryans drew on a *yuga* concept, which is not necessary to his argument, it would have designated only short time cycles or generations. Megasthenes' report from Candragupta's Maurya's time of a genealogy of 153 kings shows that the Mauryans had an early historical record even before Aśoka, probably without *yugas*. But for its association of the *yuga* with *dharma* over time, the *YP* has certainly drawn on the *Mahābhārata*.

A four-age *yuga* theory was probably brought into the *Mahābhārata* as an historical armature with which to loosely incorporate such genealogical and of course other highly "coded" information. On that note, before setting our sites on some comparable Buddhist texts, the following points can summarize matters for now just on the *Mahābhārata* and the *YP*.

1. In comparison with the *YP*, there is obviously a difference between a redemptive telos prophesied by Śiva to his son the war god, as if the two were holding their destructive power in reserve, and a text whose redemption of *dharma* prophesies a restoration of the Kṛta Yuga under Kalki Viṣṇuyaśas, "the fame of Viṣṇu" (*Mbh* 3.188.89a), and whose main redemptive narrative—as the *YP* itself would seem to recognize—is managed from within by a Kṛṣṇa who takes birth from *yuga* to *yuga* whenever *dharma* declines.
2. The *Mahābhārata* provides reassuring models for the continuum of *yugadharma* not only in its main story but in the Rāma Jāmadagnya myth. The *YP* simply extrapolates this kind of reasurance into Śiva's long-range prophetic view of recent history. Instead of presenting a new Kṛṭa *yuga* as the outcome of the end or destruction of the *yuga*, its emphasis is on the reassurance that even in the destruction of a *yuga*, meaning even in difficult times, *dharma* always has a remnant.
3. In comparison with the *BhavP*'s Magadha-oriented history, which probably, under the impact of the *Mahābhārata's* frame story, only belatedly prepones an epico-purāṇic Naimiṣa Forest setting for itself, the *YP*'s Midlands concentration looks askance at Magadha, but also looks hopefully to a third region, the South, for the survival of its *dharma* remnant. In fact, it looks to two separate regions there: one, the northern Deccan; the other, the Kāverī River valley, with its welcoming fish and boars.
4. This look to the south may coincide with another reason why the *YP* stops its north Indian history with the Mitra kings and Śakas. Its redemptive history was proving to be wishful thinking. The Śakas did not really "go home" like the Greeks. Around 25 BCE, they established themselves as Kṣatrapa (Satrap) successors to the Mitras, and remained to stay, forming trade networks and power points at centers from Taxila in the northwest to Mathurā in the midlands, and also to Ujjain in the west, where they contributed to the support and spread of mainly Buddhism.[46] There would be no reason for the

46. See Neelis 2007, 72–79; 2008, 8–10; 2009. Eventually, they would be accorded the little king status of "degenerate (*vrātya*) Kṣatriyas (Thapar 1992, 153), which would lend itself to the colonial period's idea of the "Scythian origins" of the Rājpūts (Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, 439–40).

YP's composer to envision safe havens in the south under the Mitras, but there would have been under the Kṣatrapas.

5. Following the arguments of T. P. Mahadevan (2008), this could well describe the conditions in which, by around 25 BCE, out-of-sorts Pūrvaśikhā Brahmins from the Mathurā–Kuru–Pañcāla northern midlands would have headed south and reached the Tamil-speaking regions with the *Mahābhārata* archetype in their possession.
6. As it does today, that archetype would have included passages reflecting the theory of four ages and association of the epic's main story with the turn from the Dvāpara to the Kali Yuga—albeit, as González-Reimann has demonstrated, associated loosely, inconsistently, and often metaphorically treated, and sometimes "confusing" *yugas* and *kalpas* (2002, 72, 85 n. 150), since, by the post-Aśokan time of the epic's composition, the *kalpa*, originally a Greater Magadhan concept of cyclical time, had been taken up in Brahmanical texts and considerably modified in the *Mahābhārata* to round in the *yuga*.
7. As to the separate origin of the concept of four *yugas*, a Yavana–Pañcāla–Mathurā coalition to destroy the Magadha capital in conjunction with the rise of Puṣyamitra Śuṅga in ca. 187 BCE provides a point at which we can begin to imagine how the skein of four declining ages would be among the "connection points" that the *Mahābhārata* poets profoundly reworked under the Vedic name of *yugas* from what Fernando Wulff calls the Greek repertory with its five ages, the fourth being an Age of Heroes.[47]
8. This would have been done by people interested in narrating and preserving their own history (*itihāsa*) in relation to a new epic vision of *dharma* over time, concentrating on their Kuru–Pañcāla and other pasts, and promoting in Vedic idioms a view that Vedic *dharma* perdures, whatever its pitfalls in history, through all time and generations.[48]

47. Wulff 2008, 116, 153–56 has reinforced the likelihood that the skein of four declining *yugas* would be among the "connection points" that the *Mahābhārata* poets reworked from "the Greek repertory of the *Mahābhārata*" from the Greek scheme of the decline of Justice through five races or ages. On this matter of longstanding discussion, cf. Beall 2005/6 n. 33, citing Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 48–59 for "a summary treatment" in which I note "that in the Indian case the Bhārata war is an episode between the third and fourth ages (contra Clay's [2003], 81 belief that the oriental parallels lack heroes)." For fuller discussion, see Hiltebeitel 2011*a*, chapter 4.

48. Visvanathan 2010 makes the intriguing point that "the genealogical moment" when royal genealogies begin to show on inscriptions is post-Aśokan (see chapter 2), and begins on Śuṅga inscriptions. This Śuṅga royal-Brahmanical interest could have a contemporary parallel in the Vedic genealogies of the *Mahābhārata*.

Although this is not history as a scientific sorting out of the past, it implies, just as any historical fiction would have to, a readership that would know what a sorted out and sequential history was. If it was done by out-of-sorts Brahmins in territories ruled by little "Mitra" or "Agniveśya" kings, we do not have to worry about finding them a big royal patron.[49]

9. Evidence that the *Mahābhārata* and these changing times are in mutual attunement thus includes not only a post-Mauryan framing of the *vaṃśānucarita*'s narration in the Naimiṣa Forest and the filling out of the *yuga* concept but also the fact that, like the Pañcālas and Śūrasenas in the *YP*, the Kauravas have Yavana allies in the *Mahābhārata* war (5.196.7, etc.),[50] and that next in store, according to Mārkaṇḍeya's prophesy, Greeks and Śakas will be among the barbarians who become kings in the Kali *yuga* (3.186.30).
10. Finally, the essentially linear *yuga* would have served such poets as a better armature for history than the *kalpa*. The *Mahābhārata* may "invent" the five Pāṇḍavas, the 100 Kauravas, and the six generations of which those vying cousins are the fourth.[51] But as Witzel shows, its poets extracted plausible historical data from all parts of the Vedic canon to trace out those momentous generations' pasts and futures in their *itihāsa* of the Bhāratas. Buddhists, on the other hand, beyond tracing a discontinuous *dharma* through a vast cyclical cosmology, found the *kalpa* most relevant to Jātakas and remembering past lives, as in the Buddha's recollection of a lost city in the *Mahāsudassana Sutta*, of which Rupert Gethin can say, "There is nothing here that the modern mind would be tempted to read as history" (2006, 63). With the seeming exception of Aśoka, who may have used *kalpa* with the connotation of a dynastic era or age, Buddhists had to find other more immediate ways to trace the decline of *dharma* in history.

49. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 19 proposing that the *Mahābhārata* "was written by out of sorts Brahmans who may have had some minor king's or merchant's patronage, but, probably for personal reasons, show a deep appreciation of . . . Brahmans reduced to poverty." Fitzgerald's turn to Khāravela (2010; see above nn. 25 and 30) builds from an opposite assumption, which he stated earlier as follows: "The production and promulgation of this text would have required a major effort and significant expense, so we must imagine the support and backing of some prince or princes, or direct imperial support" (2001, 69). Cf. Witzel 2005, 48, 60, 62 n. 132, 64, 70.

50. *Mbh* 5.196.7, etc. It is of interest that the Kauravas' sister Duḥśalā has Greek cowives who join other Sindhu, Sauvīra, Gāndhāra, and Kāmboja ones in mourning their husband Jayadratha Saindhava (11.22.10–11). The Pāṇḍavas also had to subdue "the Greek's city" (2.28.49) before Yudhiṣṭhira could do his Rājasūya.

51. Again, a comment on Fitzgerald 2010, who, like many before him (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 2 n. 10), and Witzel (2005, 28, 35), wants to limit "invention" in this span to the Pāṇḍavas. In mentioning the six main generations, I note that one of the surprises of Wulff's thesis (2008, 81–92. 102, 205–24) is that the *Mahābhārata* poets would have begun reworking a Greek epic repertoire that unfolds from a water goddess who, like Gaṅgā, gives birth to a mortal son over whom she will eventually grieve. On Gaṅga and the "history of the Bhāratas," see chapter 8.

B. Variations on the Debacle at Kauśāmbī

This brings us to a set of Buddhist texts that emerged against a background of incursions not only of the Greeks and Śakas but also the Pahlavas—with the Kuṣāṇas, Iran, and Rome also appearing in some later versions. As Jan Nattier has shown, these prophetic texts take us into Buddhism's historical self-consciousness (1991, 133–42), which we can now compare with the surprising historical self-consciousness evident in the *YP*. In each case, the texts provide a way to follow a course of predictions as they are tied to changing historical and social realities, and to ways in which Hindus and Buddhists considered dealings with their inner and outer others: in the *YP*, concerning a *dharma* defined mainly by population and culture; in the Buddhist texts, a *dharma* defined principally by Vinaya. In returning our attention to Buddhist texts, we thus also pick up from our discussion of Vinaya at the end of chapter 4. There, I sought to move the *AS*'s Vinaya argument with householder Brahmanism out of pre-Mauryan times and into the third- or second-century BCE. I will now move such considerations a few centuries forward to a point where one can detect more advanced concerns about the relation between Vinaya and Brahmanical society, and also the emergence of the Mahāyāna. While keeping in mind the continued unfolding of predictions of the end of the Buddhist *dharma*, I will focus on one such prediction that is also a fascinating narrative, which, for heuristic purposes and in contrast to the *AS* "parable," I will call "the Kauśāmbī myth."[52] Unlike the *AS*, it is canonical in both Nikāya-school versions and Mahāyāna versions, and almost certainly reflects historical and geographical conditions in which the spaces shared between these two great branches of Buddhism would have been part of its background.[53] Like the *AS*, it is a story about Vinaya rules and the primacy of the arhat.

For nearly a millennium, the Kauśāmbī myth had a surprising vitality, after which it aroused little interest. I will be discussing how it took on different contours in different lands during what has been called Buddhism's Middle Period, which introduced the Mahāyāna and involved the transmission of Buddhism to central Asia and China. Although there were Sanskrit or Prakrit originals behind all the versions I will discuss, none survive. This means that I will rely on translations and summaries, mainly of Chinese texts, for which

52. For Nattier, "a unique scenario," "the only canonical tradition that combines a prophesy of complete extinction of the Dharma with a narrative account of the actions leading up to this event"—compared in this with the general sense of decline in the *Lotus* and *Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtras* (1991, 131 and n. 27).

53. See Nattier 1991, 127–31 on its distribution; 145 on its "long period of trans-sectarian currency" (145). Note that I mention "spaces shared" to register that it is not found in the Sri Lankan Pāli canon (on which see more below).

Nattier 1991 is my main source. My discussion must always be cautions when Nattier summarizes rather than translates the Chinese texts.[54] But I think it is worth rearranging the deck chairs of this Buddhist Titanic in some new ways.

Nattier discusses thirteen extant versions of the Kauśāmbī myth, most in Chinese, but also in Tibetan and Khotanese, organizing them into a branching stemma involving "archetypes"—including an "original" archetype—behind extant versions. I have five misgivings about this approach.

1. The archetypes are hypothetical and selective.[55]
2. Texts that synthesize varied versions of the myth are omitted from the stemma.[56]
3. The approach encourages thinking about what Nattier calls a "core" story and treating ways the story is "framed" as secondary.[57]
4. Based on this "core" Nattier proposes an original historical incident behind the myth.[58]
5. Nattier wants to demonstrate that the story is originally nonsectarian, and *remains* so. That is, the "core" would be consistent on doctrinal matters, particularly, as we shall see, in the implications of the contrastive terms True Dharma and Semblance Dharma.

I cannot go into detail on the first four points beyond what is noted. Suffice it to say that methodologically, in treating myths or for that matter any narratives, one would naturally prefer to be dealing with actual texts than hypothetical cores and archetypes. It is regarding point 5 that I will be rearranging the deck chairs. Rather than a branching linear stemma, I will take up versions of the Kauśāmbī myth in three successive text clusters. These are:

1. an "alpha-cluster," for what is probably the oldest version (late first- to second-century CE), linked with the expansion of Buddhism into Central Asia and reflecting, I believe, early tension between Nikāya school and Mahāyāna Buddhism;

54. As Nattier reminds me in an e-mail (2008*a*) after reading a shortened version of this analysis prepared for a talk, the Chinese summaries she drew on were aided by John McRae (see Nattier 1991, xii). I thank her for her continued interest. The talk, presented as "The End of the *Dharma* in India, Central Asia, and China," was given at the "Bringing Buddhism to Varied Lands" Colloquium at George Washington University, April 14, 2008.

55. Nattier comments (2008*a*, 2) that my working with "clusters" is also "selective." That is to be granted.

56. See Nattier 1991, 214: The stemma principles are unable to resolve three types of complications: deliberate condensation to fit a stylistic genre, as with the *Mahāvibhāṣā* version; use of more than one version in a retelling, also as with the *Mahāvibhāṣā*; and insufficient data to account for lost oral versions, as with *Mahāmāyā-Sūtra*.

57. For this terminology, see Nattier 1991, 177, 186, 206, 224 on the "core" (the continuity of the core is, I believe, overstated); 183–85, 207 on the "frame" and "framing." On textual "frames," see chapters 4 § C.3 and 5 § C.

58. Nattier asks, "Or might the original story simply have been the narration of an actual historical event which—despite its manifestly uninspiring content—was simply too vivid a memory to be forgotten?" (219–20). Opening this thought from the beginning (4), she eventually favors it, but as far as I am concerned it is unconvincing.

2. an "S-cluster," not much later, linked with Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin Buddhism[59] as the schools most representative of entrenched Nikāya school Buddhism in Northern India; and
3. an "M-cluster," later than the other two by about two centuries, linked to the spread of the Mahāyāna from India principally to China, and also Tibet.

Now, according to Nattier, we can say "with certainty" that "the original Kauśāmbī story was utterly devoid of Mahāyāna content" (1991, 223). Although Nattier is a shrewd detective on the sectarian provenance and implications of each text, my suspicion is that even if Nikāya school versions are earlier and do not mention the Mahāyāna or show its features, each of these clusters, and most clearly the first and the third, reflect perceptions that Nikāya school–Mahāyāna tensions were an *unstated* symptom (others being stated) of what will bring the *dharma* to its end. Rather than identifiable content, I believe we are dealing with knowing allusions. As we have seen already in the three preceding chapters, Indian *dharma* texts can be quite coy in alluding to competing views of *dharma*. In this myth, the end of the *dharma* is a topic that engages Buddhists in envisioning differences mainly among themselves.

Nattier points out that the Kauśāmbī myth is "conspicuous by its absence from the voluminous Theravādin literature" (1991, 222). While this holds for the Pāli canon, a late version, apparently minus any reference to Kosambi/Kauśāmbī, and with other truncations, has made its way into a fifteenth/early sixteenth-century Pāli chronicle in northern Thailand, the *Tamman Mūlasāsanā* (Veidlinger 2006, 22–23). The Buddha prophesies what will happen in 5,000 years. The three baskets will vanish in order: Suttas, Abhidhamma, and Vinaya. At that point, "'Vinaya will be corrupted and will vanish.' And furthermore, once even the *Pātimokkha* and *Pārājika* have disappeared because people who know them can not be found, the following disturbing scenario will unfold: 'When a king will desire to hear the Dhamma, he will not be able to find someone in the kingdom who knows the Dhamma.'" The apparently unnamed king will put a prize of gold on the back of an elephant and have it paraded around his kingdom with the announcement that, even if someone knows just "a four-line

59. A plausible approach to the relation between these two schools was presented in the "Early Buddhism" panel at the 15th Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, June 24, 2008, by Alexander Wynne, arguing that while they probably did not differ in doctrine or use of extra-Vinaya texts, their different Vinayas point to their separation over a Vinaya dispute: the Mūlasarvāstivādins, centered around Mathurā, claimed to be the "source" (*mūla*) of the Kashmir-based Sarvāstivādins' Vinaya, that the Sarvāstivādins were an offshoot, and that their Vinaya was inferior. Cf. Nattier 1991, 43 n. 41, 205–6, 222; Schopen 2004, 25 and 41 n. 35: the name could mean "either '*the Original Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādins*' or '*the Vinaya of the Original Sarvāstivādins.*'"

verse," he can claim the prize. But the search will be futile and the prize will be returned to the king. "Thus at this time the knowledge of the texts and thereby the doctrine of the Buddha will be lost" (58–60). Missing details of this story will soon become clear, and the dating of this Theravāda text will not be surprising should the story have routed itself from China or Tibet.

More immediately, however, the Theravāda *Vinaya* does tell at length about the Buddha's dealings with the fractious monks of Kosambi. The account is fascinating for everyone's sustained silence on what "that matter" of dispute was, with the Buddha finally steering the two factions, once they are ready, to a solution despite having never gotten "to the bottom of" it, as he himself tells the *Vinaya*-master Upāli (*Mahāvagga, Khandaka* 10 10.6.2).[60] According to H. W. Schumann, "If we are to believe the commentary, it was a lavatory water-jar. . . . A monk . . . had left the latrine without throwing out the remaining water."[61] Whatever it was, one senses that the Buddha is portrayed as preferring to let the monks reach their own conclusions than to rule on the specific matter. Other scholars (Chappell 1980, 128; Lamotte 1988, 198) have thought that they detected an echo of the first difficulties at Kosambi in the prophetic Kauśāmbī myth, and I believe this is more plausible than an "original" historical incident. I suggest three possible thematic continuities. In both, we find a condescending attitude on the part of the leader of one faction. In both, the contending parties are unable to perform the *prātimokṣa* together. And in both, there is a rebuke of the bickering monks by the laity.[62]

Let us, however, grant that a myth, not to mention a prophetic one, does require its historical grounding to be forgotten, or at least misrecognized. Nattier draws a distinction between an historical arhaticide which she finds "no persuasive reason to question" and the decline prophesy, which "is another matter altogether."[63] But we can only progress if we put the arhaticide back in the myth, leave its historicity as a distraction, and keep our questions to the historical grounding of the myth itself. Like any good myth, it can be expected to weave together a number of oppositions, both tacit and explicit; to leave

60. See Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 1982, 2: 285–325; see also the *Kosambiya Sutta* (*MN* 48).

61. Schumann 1989, 119, and more fully 117–21. Cf. Ñāṇamoli 1972, 109–19.

62. The only locational note I find is that it would not be surprising "[t]hat a non-Mahāyāna story should be set at Kauśāmbī, since both Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsang report it to have been mostly or entirely non-Mahāyāna. Hsüan-tsang must know the story, since he reports of Kosambī: 'The law of Śākya becoming extinct, this will be the very last country in which it will survive'" (Nattier 1991, 223 n. 16).

63. Nattier 1991, 225. This gets quite contrived. Nattier thinks the names of Śiyṣaka, Sūrata, and Aṅgada meet the test of historical verisimilitude since they are unusual and not "explicitly didactic." But what could be more didactic than Śiṣyaka, "He Who Has Disciples"? She asks, would not a different, less "ambigious" kind of story "have served the purpose better?" "Only later, perhaps, was the story shifted into the future and brought into conjunction with a prophesy of the end of the Dharma" (220–21).

incongruities from one version to the next; and to be adaptable to different historical, social, and, in the present case, sectarian purposes. Much safer historical grounding is to be found where Nattier traces the origin of the myth itself—for her, the tale of the end of the *dharma*—to a period no earlier than the occurrence of actual invasions by Greeks, Śakas, and Parthians, whose three kings bear these peoples' names as ethnonyms in the myth.[64]

B.1. The alpha-*cluster and the* Prophesy of Kātyāyana

Nattier posits that the oldest extant version of the Kauśāmbī myth is found in the verse and prose versions of the *Prophesy of Kātyāyana*. She makes two major points in favor this priority. The prophesy is made by the Buddha's disciple Kātyāyāna and not, as in all other versions, elevated to the sūtra status of Buddhavacana, "the word of the Buddha"; and the poetic version is the first textual account of the Kauśāmbī myth to have been translated into Chinese during or before the Western Chin dynasty (265–316 CE) (1991, 157–58). The first point is the hardest to argue around, and looks to me like a solid indicator of priority. Now, if we look at these two texts as a whole, and ignore the attempt to discern an original historical incident behind their alleged "core," we have a story that may have considerable heuristic value: "an unnamed king ruling at Kauśāmbī . . . successfully repels a foreign invasion" of Greek, Śaka, and Parthian kings. As Nattier shows, this places the myth in a period no earlier than the occurrence of actual invasions by these peoples. To celebrate, the Kauśāmbī king's preceptor Śiṣyaka recommends that he invite "the monks from surrounding regions to Kauśāmbī."[65] There, a confrontation occurs, which the *Prophesy of Kātyāyana* in verse recounts as follows:

> A group "numbered in the hundreds of thousands" will meet, and on the 15th day (when the *Prātimokṣa* is to be recited), a quarrel will break out. A large group of *bhikṣus*, thinking themselves superior to the rest, issue a condescending statement to the effect that they understand more about Dharma than anyone else. "If there is one *bhikṣu* who has attained enlightenment," they assert, "then he can preach about the origins and end [of the Dharma], and we will study his sūtra[s]." Much to their dismay, however, just such a *bhikṣu*

64. See Nattier 1991, 226, tracing the origins of the myth to "northwest India sometime between the beginning of the 2nd century CE and the middle of the 3rd" when "throughout most of this period northwest India was part of the powerful Kushan empire."

65. The quotes are from Nattier's description of the original archetype behind the *alpha*-cluster (1991, 219–20).

> happens to be present in the audience. This monk, named *Su-lai* (Skt. *Sūrata*?), rises from his seat and proclaims that he does indeed keep the precepts, has no doubt concerning the Dharma and Vinaya, has penetrated the scriptures, and truly understands the meaning of the path. He rebukes the self-righteous monks for praising themselves so much, which arouses the anger of a student of the honored teacher (= Śiṣyaka), named *A-ssu* («Skt. *Aṅgada*?), who then strikes and injures the Arhat. A Dharma-loving Yakṣa[66] . . . then seizes a vajra and kills *A-ssu*. The earth shakes in the familiar six ways, various ill omens appear, and the ultimate fate of the Dharma is described as follows. "The lamp of the Dharma is already out. The correct scriptures are already destroyed." (Nattier 1991, 158–59)

Now if Sūrata is killed but not Śiṣyaka, and Śiṣyaka's crowd get to go on with their truncated following of the rules, and if "this primitive version" ends with that, it would mean that the *alpha*-cluster myth is originally about the end of the Dharma as something that occurs with the death of the last arhat. To keep Steven Collins's phrase alive (1993; see chapter 4 § C.3), the arhat is "what is primary"—his death alone marks the end of the *dharma*. Śiṣyaka is not killed as he is in all other versions than the verse *Prophesy of Kātyāyana*, including its prose counterpart. The arhat's primacy both stands out as exceptional and is found in what appears to be the earliest version (see Nattier 1991, 210–11). Indeed, this is an arhat who knows, follows, and dies championing the *Prātimokṣa*. With that, we would have a suggestive way to demarcate the two factions, for the arhat could be "what is primary" only on a Nikāya school side of the aisle. Although early Mahāyāna practitioners would have followed the *Prātimokṣa* and been at least as strict about the rules, the arhat would be precisely what is not primary for the vehicle of the *bodhisattva*.[67]

Indeed, the text summary offers some irresistible clues in this direction. The "large group" that thinks it knows more about Dharma than anybody else says that if there is anyone who has attained enlightenment, "they will study his sūtra[s]"! There is something poignant in an arhat, who *is* enlightened, sidestepping an invitation to preach "his sūtra[s]." They look to be something other than the scriptures the arhat has "penetrated" and the "correct scriptures" that are

66. Nattier 1991 reads "demon" at this point. Her e-mail (2008*a*, 2–3) clarifies this now to a Yakṣa.

67. I thank Nattier 2008*a*, 3 for her cautionary comments on this point, calling attention to Daniel Boucher's forthcoming book on the *Rāṣṭrapāla Pāripṛcchā*, and maintaining that the Prātimokṣa is "a 'prerequisite for both groups for spiritual advancement, but not the be-all and end-all. . . . Thus the observance of the Prātimokṣa doesn't work as a way to distinguish Mahāyāna from non-Mahāyāna practitioners." My point, however, is not that the *Prātimokṣa* distinguishes the two, but the emphasis on the arhat's allegiance to it.

then said to have been "destroyed" with his passing. It looks like the condescending faction would be ready to listen if he or someone else were to preach Mahāyāna teachings. And if it is really a question of "sūtra[s]" and not just his "*dharma*," they could even be participants in what Schopen calls "the cult of the book."[68] A Mahāyāna faction, or better, a mixed monastic group, projected as "all the monks of Jambudvīpa" (158), would then be left with a Mahāyāna-inclined Teacher (Śiṣyaka as "He Who Has Disciples" [Nattier 1991, 153; cf. 292]), who could well be portrayed as insouciant in honoring the Vinaya rules.

Taking this a few steps further, the *Prophesy of Kātyāyana* in prose mentions that the dispute is over a *prātimokṣa* of 250 rules. This opens the possibility that the myth had this early circulation in the one Nikāya school that had that precise number, that of the Dharmaguptakas.[69] This school had not only the usual Three Baskets but a fourth, the Bodhisattva Piṭaka.[70] With such an "open canon,"[71] and one open in this specific way, the Dharmaguptakas could have provided a fitting milieu in which to take interest in a myth that involved tensions between the two parties in a still-early phase, such as Buddhist studies has recently come to recognize,[72] of mutual side-by-side communion. It is also

68. Nattier 2008*a*, 3 sees "no evidence of 'the cult of the book here,'" saying that what appears above as "sūtra[s]" could simply be translating "Dharma." This would not rule out reference to specific sūtra[s], but it would weaken this part of my argument. So I asked Nattier if she could look again. I thank her for this follow-up information (2008*b*), which leaves me some wriggle room: "First of all the term that was translated as 'sūtra[s]' . . . does turn out to be *jing* (this occurrence is in T2029, 49.11c28) . . . the term generally used to translate 'sūtra' in scripture titles, but [used] more broadly . . . to mean simply 'classic' . . . [but also] one of several expressions used by a number of early translators to translate '*dharma*.' My own take on this is that for a Chinese audience Buddhism was represented primarily by its texts, and thus when an Indic-language original talked of the Buddha 'preaching the Dharma' (*dharmaṃ deśayati sma*, etc.), the Chinese translated it as 'preaching the classics' (*shuo jing*). A different explanation is given by Stefano Zacchetti [citing Vetter and Zacchetti 2004, 160], who suggests that this usage reflects an older meaning of *jing*, i.e., 'norm, standard.' In either case, though, it's clear that (whatever the rationale) *jing*, like *jingfa* (*fa* being the standard translation of Dharma in most other contexts), was often used in the second and third centuries CE to translate '*dharma*.'" Nattier clarifies that it is difficult to identify the underlying Indic term because the translator is anonymous, but adds that there are "some other items in this same verse translation that make me think it is extremely likely that he was following this archaic practice of translating *dharma* as *jing*," citing a reference at 12a5 "to *jingjie*, 'classics and precepts' which looks, in the context, very much like a rendition of the standard term *dharma-vinaya*. . . . So, though it's impossible to prove this 100%, it does seem most plausible to interpret *jing* here as Dharma."

69. Nattier 1991, 166–68, 222–23, though as 222 n. 14 indicates, the reference to 250 rules could have been added in China.

70. See Nattier 2003, 46 n. 80; 80–83, 129, 274–76; Pagel 1995, 7–36. Curiously, the Bahuśrutīyas also had a *bodhisattvapiṭaka*, but in a canon of five baskets (Nattier 2003, 46 n. 80).

71. See Collins 1990 on the important point that among all Buddhist schools and traditions, only the Theravāda sought to have a closed canon. Another illustration of the openness of the Dharmaguptaka canon is found in the addition to its *Prātimokṣa* of twenty-six *śaikṣa* rules defining "appropriate conduct at a stūpa," which Prebish suggests would help to explain "the high status of its Vinaya in the development of Chinese Buddhism" (1996, 270). This would likely also apply to his sect's spread into central Asia.

72. See Nattier 2003; Williams 2000, 96–191; 2009, 5–7; Robinson et al. 2005, 43–123, with input from Nattier (xiv).

of interest that the earliest texts to tell the Kauśāmbī myth in this way show signs of telling it from a Bactrian perspective. According to Nattier, their likely use of the Kharoṣṭhi script and the renaming of the three kings in the verse *Prophesy of Kātyāyana* to include Rome and Iran suggest that this version of the myth travelled to Bactria, where the Dharmaguptakas and perhaps the Mahāsaṅghikas could have used it in their spread through Central Asia (Nattier 1991, 161, 222).

But Rome and Iran aside, the *alpha*-cluster would still point us to northwest India for the original.

B.2. The S-cluster of the (Mūla-) Sarvāstivādins

I use the name S-cluster to bring together versions of the Kauśāmbī myth told with similar contours in four texts, all of Sarvāstivādin (or Mūlasarvāstivādin) provenance. In these texts, the myth would seem to have been composed and transmitted in three different genres or formats—*sūtra, avadāna,*[73] and *Abhidharma*—within a loose but consistent conceptual framework supplied by the relatively open canon(s) of these "Sarvāstivādin" schools—relative, that is,, to the closed Theravāda canon and the still more open Dharmaguptaka canon.[74] One version is included in the *Saṃyukta Āgama* (*Saṃyuktāgama*), which means that it has a place in the Sarvāstivādins' first Basket, its *Sūtra* (= Pāli *Sutta*) *Piṭaka*. In Northern Nikāya schools, the *Saṃyuktāgama* is the "equivalent" of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* in the Pāli canon, but the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, like the Pāli canon in toto (as mentioned above), knows nothing of the Kauśāmbī myth. Another version yields two texts found in Chinese and Tibetan translations of the *Aśokāvadāna*, itself probably also originally a Sarvāstivādin text geared to attracting wider north Indian audiences (Strong 1983, 26–37). The section telling the Kauśāmbī myth does not, however, appear to be an original feature of this text, since it is not included in its first Chinese translation in 306 CE or in the surviving Sanskrit *Aśokāvadāna* (Strong trans. [1983]; Nattier 1991, 151). The third text, which seems to be an Abhidharmic digest of several known versions, is found in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, where it seems to be a condensation of

73. On the *avadāna* genre as stressing reliance on the power of Buddhas in contrast to the *jātakas*' emphasis on self-reliance to become a Buddha, and the relation of both paradigms to early Mahāyāna Bodhisattva sūtras as "a missing link in the story of the development of Indian Buddhism," see Robinson et al. 2005, 77–78, 84–86; cf. Strong 1983, 32–33 relating this aspect of the *avadāna* genre to *bhakti*; Rotman 2009, on its devotional dimension in relation to Buddhist visual culture.

74. Cf. above, n. 71 on closed and open canons. See Strong 1983, 31 on the Sarvāstivādins' particular willingness "to add more materials to their 'canon,'" including *avadānas*, and to write Buddhist texts in Sanskrit. Cf. Lamotte 1988, 154: As the *āgamas* "were closed much later, they make room for works of a comparatively recent date; hence the *Saṃyukta* . . . contains long extracts from the *Aśokāvadāna*."

the myth from within the same school.[75] The Kauśāmbī myth undergoes Chinese translation in these versions first in the *Saṃyuktāgama* (443 CE), then in an enlarged *Aśokāvadāna* (late fifth century), and then in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (656–59 CE) (Lamotte 1988, 201–2; Nattier 1991, 146, 150). This, of course, cannot supply the order or dates of composition in India. As Nattier notes regarding the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, "the bulk of its content is generally assigned to around the 2nd C. CE" (Nattier 1991, 146, citing Lamotte 1988, 217–18).

My approach to this cluster differs from Nattier's. She calls the first three of these texts "the *Aśoka-avadāna* group," and leaves the *Mahāvibhāṣā* version aside. After noting that it has some affinities with the other three versions,[76] she views it as ultimately irrelevant to her stemma because, as an Abhidharma compendium, it draws from more than one source.[77] In selecting the name "*Aśoka-avadāna* group," Nattier would appear to be fortifying her view that an *Aśokāvadāna* version would have priority over the *Saṃyuktāgama* version. But, as I shall indicate, I think that point is tenuous.

Now the overall impression is that S-cluster versions have two components: one reworked and one new. In the first case, the end of the True Dharma still comes about amid events that include the death of the last *arhat*. Otherwise, "the cast of characters is considerably expanded" (Nattier 1991, 152), as is the plot, in the buildup and the denouement. In recounting the killing of the arhat, there are new features, but the story discernible in the *Prophesy of Kātyāyana* seems to be reduced, and in any case yields no suggestive innuendos that Nikāya school–Mahāyāna tensions are among the symptoms of the end. Here is Nattier's summary of this portion from the *Saṃyuktāgama* and the two *Aśokāvadana* translations:

> When the monks gather for the *poṣadha* (Pāli *uposatha*) ceremony [where the *prātimokṣa* should be recited], Śiṣyaka, the head of the sangha, wants to recite the monastic rules in abbreviated form. "If even I, who am the most learned of all, cannot keep the rules in their entirety, who else can?" he argues. But the arhat Sūrata rises to object. As in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, Sūrata proclaims that he does keep the monastic rules to the letter, and that Śiṣyaka should therefore

75. See Nattier 1991, 146–50, who I believe is right in underlining the different Abhidharma literary processes behind it, including likely reference to varied versions that would mean it was not the earliest version, as suggested by Lamotte (1988, 198, 200).

76. The *Mahāvibhāṣā* differs in having two invading kings and only one unnamed king of Kauśāmbī, who could be the father or, I think, more likely the son or an elision of the distinction (Nattier 1991, 152); Nattier recognizes that the father's death "is restricted to" the other texts of our S-cluster "and serves as one indicator of the distinctive character of this textual family" (211).

77. Point for point, see Nattier 1991, 150–52, 185–86; 206, 214–15.

> recite the rules in their entirety. A disciple of Śiṣyaka, named Aṅgada, is outraged at this insult to his teacher, and strikes and kills the arhat. Aṅgada is in turn killed by a *yakṣa*, Dadhimukha, and one or more disciples of Sūrata then kill Śiṣyaka. Then the Buddha-Dharma, the texts tell us, gradually disappears. (Nattier 1991, 154; my brackets)

If the *alpha*-cluster is earlier, as I think remains convincing, it would appear that any suggestion of Mahāyana allusions has been systematically removed! What seems to have replaced them is an in-house Sarvāstivādin version cleared of such implications. Indeed, Lamotte's translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣā*'s telling has a singular twist that would seem to reinforce this conclusion. Śiṣyaka is now a "Tripiṭaka master," and when he is asked to recite the *Prātimokṣa* in public and wants to recite it in brief, Sūrata says,

> "I would like the elder (*sthavira*) to recite the Tripiṭaka in full." Śiṣyaka will answer: "If there is [a monk] in the assembly who is capable of observing all the precepts in the Prātimokṣa, let him invite me to recite it in full!" The Arhat will respond: "I myself am capable of observing the fine details (*prāntikoṭi*) of the ruling (*śīkṣapada*) observed by the bhikṣus when the Buddha was alive; if that is what you call being capable of observing [the Prātimokṣa] completely, then I beg you to recite [the Tripiṭaka] in full." (Lamotte 1988, 200)

Again, the arhat takes his stand on the Vinaya rules,[78] but, most interestingly, he seems to be challenging the "Tripiṭaka master's" right to his title. In turn, Śiṣyaka's dodge seems to suggest that he does not know how to recite anything in full. In any case, their two types of authority rest on the content of the Three Baskets and no more than that. Śiṣyaka gives no hint that he would be interested in hearing some enlightened person's "sūtra[s]," and is himself supposed to be an expert in the Three Baskets only. As in the three other S-cluster texts, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* knows, as one of three possibilities, "that it was the Arhat's disciples who killed the Tripiṭaka master in revenge" (*Idem*).[79] Throughout the S-cluster, then, the arhat now has his own murderous faction of monks, all presumably from the same "school" as Śiṣyaka's, and things are ready to go from bad to worse.

78. On arhats preserving Vinaya, see Lamotte 1988, 174–75. The introduction to the Mahāsaṅghika Prātimokṣa speaks of the Prātimokṣa's preservation as a measure of the duration of the *Saddharma*, while the Mūlasarvāstivādin Prātimokṣa's opening exalts itself as "the 'compendium of the True Dharma written by the King of the True Dharma'"! Such openings may be "additions" (Prebish 1975, 119–20 n. 18). The Theravāda Pātimokkha lacks one.

79. The other two are that the gods, *nāgas*, and *yakṣas* did it, or the king did it.

As to the expansions in the run-up and denouement, the new elements in the S-cluster have two main features: one is new touches that locate the account in Indian society; and the other is that the narrative now has an epical quality with some details possibly reminiscent of the *Mahābhārata*. These features could of course coincide.

On the first point, one detail clearly links the myth with Brahmanical society: Śiṣyaka is now the son of a Brahmin named Agnidatta. Other details appear to be given without caste or religious specificity, which may have been lost in translation or imply a mixed Brahmanical–Buddhist situation, or both. Sūrata, for instance, is the son of "an elder named Sudhana," whatever that means.[80] Five hundred "ministers" (often implying Brahmins) or "heads of families" serve the king. The monastic community has become "impure and lazy, . . . due in part to their being accustomed to receive large offerings." And a group of 500 laity "censures the monks for their misconduct and urges them to bring their quarrels to an end." In the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, these are 500 "pious householders" (*gṛhapati*) who indicate that they themselves have not been short on largesse, so the bad turn must be the monks' fault.[81] This rebuke by the 500 laity could be a reminiscence of the quarrel between the monks at Kosambi during the Buddha's lifetime, for there, what finally drove the two factions to seek reconciliation was that the "lay-devotees of Kosambī" backed up their censure by ceasing to show the monks honors or give them food "so that they would go away, or return to the world, or propitiate the Blessed One" (*Vinaya, Mahāvagga* 10.5.1–2; Rhys Davids and Oldenberg [1981] 1968, Part 2: 314). In any case, the theme is consistent with an overall Vinaya concern that monks keep a good face for the society that feeds and further maintains them. In the Kauśāmbī myth, Śiṣyaka is a "leader of the saṅgha" whose shortcomings in Vinaya represent a faction that has grown too content with royal and public largesse. Being the son of a Brahmin and leading such a *saṅgha* places the monks on a par with what the *dharmaśāstras* say should be a unique entitlement of Brahmins: to receive gifts. All this is consonant with Schopen's picture of the *Mūlasarvāstivādin-vinaya* being composed, like other surviving Vinayas as we have them, in the early centuries of the common era by "profoundly conservative men" who were "preoccupied—if not obsessed—with avoiding any hint of social criticism," and "timid," particularly in the Mūlasarvāstivādins' case, about their "public image" where it came to the revival of early Buddhist forest

80. In the Tibetan version of the *Candragarbha Sūtra*, Sudhana will be taken as a merchant name ("Good Wealth") (Nattier 1991, 246).

81. Nattier 1991, 153–54; Lamotte 1988, 199–200. Of these details, only the rebuke by the 500 laity is mentioned in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*.

and cremation ground practices by, and in the name of, Mahāyāna bodhisattvas. Says Schopen, "This, moreover, is the Buddhism that succeeded in India, that built and ran Sāñci, the monasteries at Taxila and Pitalkhora. It did so, it seems, because it had learned how to write a loan contract and how to 'properly' behave" (2004, 96; 2006, 316, 345 quoted).

But it is in its epical sweep that the S-cluster is entirely innovative, with new names and a more elaborate geo-temporal plot. In what is now Buddhavacana, the Buddha himself prophesies:

> One thousand years after the Buddha's death, the Dharma will be about to disappear. There will arise three evil kings, "Greek" in the north, "Saka" in the south, and "Parthian" in the west, and according to the *Saṃyuktāgama*, Tuṣāra or "Kushan" in the east.[82] These kings will invade India and persecute Buddhist believers and destroy Buddhist monuments in their path. King Mahendrasena, ruling in the east at Kauśāmbī, will have a son named Duṣprasaha, "Hard to Bear." That same night sons will also be born to five hundred "great ministers,"[83] and a rain of blood will fall. When Mahendrasena asks a soothsayer about these omens, he will hear that Duṣprasaha will grow up to conquer all of Jambudvīpa, killing many people. All this will come to pass when Duṣprasaha conquers and kills the foreign invaders. Meanwhile, Śiṣyaka and Surāta will be born in Paṭaliputra: the one destined to be a great teacher; the other a great arhat. Upon the death of Mahendrasena, Duṣprasaha, now king, is plunged into depression and doubt, and asks the Buddhist monks when the Dharma will be destroyed.[84] Learning it will happen in twelve years, he resolves to hold a great *pañcavarṣa* feast for that entire period.[85] Duṣprasaha now invites all the monks of Jambudvīpa, but the monks get used to all the royal largesse. In the *Mahāvibhāṣā*'s description

82. Nattier: a direction normally reserved for the "good king" of Kauśāmbī in other versions (1991, 153 n. 18).

83. This is Nattier's translation of what the Chinese *Saṃyuktāgama* has. It finds a corroborating "ministers" in the Tibetan translation of the *Aśokāvadāna*, while the Chinese translation of the latter yields "heads of families"; and in the Tibetan translation of the *Candragarbha Sūtra* where the Chinese has "elders" (Nattier 1991, 178, 242, 249).

84. See Nattier 1991, 253 and n. 20: the variants raise some uncertainties here.

85. To this point, all events are from Nattier's summary of the *Saṃyuktāgama* and *Aśokāvadāna* versions, and, with the exception of the invasion by only two barbarian kings and the victorious Kauśāmbī king's decision to hold the feast for all the monks of Jambudvīpa, the details so far are not found in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*. As Nattier notes, another difference between the latter and the other three accounts is that the *Vibhāṣā* mentions only one Kauśāmbī king without naming him (1991, 152). She assumes that because it does not mention the father's death, the one king is the father, but that does not seem to be certain.

of their decadence, they gather "to discuss worldly matters (*lokadharma*)," make loud confused cries, get "lazy," sleep late, are "devoid of reasoning and reflection," "neglect the true teaching," and "no longer follow the practices" (Lamotte 1988, 199). Various supernaturals are offended and five hundred laity warn the monks to cease quarreling, all to no avail. When Duṣprasaha hears about the *uposatha*-night massacre,[86] he flies into a blind rage and begins to kill more monks and destroy stūpas and monasteries. Finally the Buddha tells the four World Regents (*lokapālas*), "The Dharma that you were assigned to protect has died out." (see Lamotte 1988, 198–200; Nattier 1991, 153–54)

Clearly, this end of the Dharma has taken on a more epical coloring. I confine myself to six features that may resonate particularly with the *Mahābhārata*.

1. The great turning point on which the end of the *dharma* hinges is now a great royal festival, the *pañcavarṣa* (var. *pañcavarṣika*) or "quinquennial assembly," which is not mentioned in anything connected with the *alpha*-cluster. Some things are known about it from the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsangs's description of one held by the seventh-century CE north Indian Buddhist emperor Harṣa of Kanauj (not far from Kauśāmbī), and from the Sanskrit *Aśokāvadāna* itself. A *pañcavarṣa*-performing king should give away everything accumulated in his treasury over five previous years in an extravaganza of *dāna* or giving, implicitly gambling away his kingdom and himself in expectation that his wealth and kingdom will be redeemed by further donations made by his vassals.[87] In the Sanskrit *Aśokāvadāna*, it figures as a turning point in Aśoka's tortured rivalry with his son Kunāla (see Strong 1983, 92–96, 264–68), which, as I suggested elsewhere (Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 262–63), holds echoes of the *Mahābhārata* 's downward turning point for *dharma*: the betting at the epic dice match. If the Kauśāmbī story now has a *pañcavarṣa* backdrop, it looks disquieting indeed. What could it mean that King Duṣprasaha intends to stretch such a pageant to the twelve years predicted for the end of the *dharma*? Is he gambling that the True Dharma will somehow not end? That his munificence toward the monks will somehow help to reverse the prophesy? The True Dharma appears to be what is at stake, and the dialogue between Śiṣyaka and Sūrata is as cagey and ominous as that between Aśoka and

86. "That very night, as the *uposatha* is being celebrated in the monastery, . . ." (Lamotte 1988, 200).
87. On the ritual by Harsha, see Strong 1983, 92–94 with citations, including Lamotte 1988, 60.

Kunāla or the gambling protagonists in the *Mahābhārata*.[88] Are the 500 great ministers born on the same night as Duṣprasaha to a rain of blood the vassals who should ransom him after all his giving?

2. The formation of a name like Duṣprasaha ("Hard to Bear") looks suspiciously reminiscent of the way the *Mahābhārata* names the 100 wicked Kauravas, brothers of Duryodhana ("Hard to Fight"), many of whom have names with the same "hard to"/"bad" prefix,[89] and all of whom are born within a month of Duryodhana, who is born to the sound of jackals (*Mbh* 1.107.24–37). It would help to know more about Duṣprasaha's melancholy and doubt after his father's death, which comes before he learns about the twelve years left for the *dharma*; and about his final paroxysm of murderous rage that follows the nighttime massacre that brings the twelve years to their predicted climax. It may correspond to what follows the final paroxysm of giving that we see in Harsha's *pancavarṣa*, where Harsha dons a worn and common monastic robe and goes "to worship before the Buddhas of the ten countries" (Strong 1983, 93)—but by inversion: rather than become a monk, Duṣprasaha joins in their already-begun slaughter. The suggestion is made with the *Mahābhārata* dice match in mind, which, as part of a similar royal ceremony, the Royal Consecration or Rājasūya, the king should win rather than lose, as he does in the *Mahābhārata* story (see van Buitenen 1972).
3. An epic sweep can also be noted in the new chronology. Although a 1,000-year timetable for the True Dharma seems to enter the Kauśāmbī myth from its earliest Northern Nikāya tellings on, including the *Prophesy of Kātyāyana* in verse, it appears that a twelve-year hinge period at the end of the 1,000 years is an S-cluster innovation.[90]

88. After Aśoka announces he will give vast wealth to the saṅgha and bathe the Bodhi Tree, Kunāla gestures that he will double the amount, forcing his father to triple his original offer, which Kunāla quadruples, until "Aśoka, retaining only the state treasury, makes a total gift to the sangha of his whole kingdom, his harem, his ministers, his self, and his son Kunāla. . . . Kunāla, finding himself part of his father's gift, cannot very well outdo him" (Strong 1983, 95–96). The *Mahābhārata* parallel envisions a brahmanical king as imperial. Cf. Inden 2006, 91–94, contrasting this imperial mode of Buddhist ceremonial with the preference for Śrauta rites in regional states, by which regional rulers could "declare their independence by again performing the horse sacrifice and other Śrauta rites that had been in abeyance," and gifting land to Brahmins at the end of these rites, "when one of these imperial kingdoms contracted"—as Puṣyamitra Śuṅga, the Sātavāhanas, and Guptas did (94).

89. In the *Mahābhārata*, Duṣprasaha is a name for Garuḍa, the king of birds in his role as devourer of snakes (1.20.11). The forms *duṣ*- and *dur*- are equivalent formations of *dus*- governed by rules of consonant combination, all meaning "hard to X," "bad X."

90. See Nattier 1991, 45 on the *Prophesy of Kātyāyana*'s distinctive division of the 1,000 years into three 300 years "supplemented (apparently) by a final segment of a hundred years." This is, of course a summary, but it does not seem to involve an extra twelve years. On the 1,000-year timetable and the Nikāya schools' texts more generally, see 62–64, 72. As Nattier argues, the 1,000-year period by itself looks like a reinterpretation of "the original figure of five hundred years to refer to the duration of the 'True Dharma'" attendant on the admission of women to the order, and probably reflects a "crisis of historical self-consciousness" in that the initial 500 years were passing (1991, 62).

The twelve-year hinge suggests a nod to the Brahmanical *yuga* system. Although Buddhists probably had not yet begun to refer to this system, the S-cluster would be familiar with its early usages in the Sanskrit epics and *Manu*. It is built on a numerology of 1,000-year units and multiples thereof, with dawns and twilights one-tenth their length, that gives the total of 12,000 years, mentioned in *Manu*,[91] for one complete *mahāyuga* cycle, the smallest nonfractional division of which is a twelve-year period. In the *Mahābhārata*, that is what one finds stipulated for the Pāṇḍavas' period of exile once they have lost the dice match, which itself marks a nadir in the decline of the *dharma*; on the Pāṇḍavas' fulfillment of that twelve years plus a thirteenth year (twelve months) incognito, the restoration of the *dharma* hinges. Indeed, as is widely recognized, the epic's dice match narrative plays on a correlation between the names of the *yugas* and the names of the four throws of the dice. What we seem to have in the S-cluster narratives of a 1,000-year period plus (or in some way including) a twelve-year hinge is an allusion to such ideas without acknowledging them. According to Nattier (1991, 115 n. 130), Indian Buddhists do not begin using the classical Brahmanical *yuga* structure until the Gupta period, when they start doing so as a kind of concession to prevalent Hindu usages (see chapter 6 § A). Without naming *yugas* as such, the S-cluster's 1,012-year chronology already looks to be intermediary between a Brahmanical view and a more representative Buddhist one, which would hold, philosophically, that "the 'decline of the Dharma' refers not to the decay of the order of the universe as such, but primarily to the fading away and eventual disappearance of the teachings of a specific historical figure" (Nattier 1991, 281). While the arhat still accounts for what is primary, the decaying order of the universe seems to have stepped up its role.

4. The S-cluster's epical sweep fills out in its geography. But on this topic I must open with an uncertainty. The term *madhyadeśa*, the "Middle Region," does not appear in available translations or summaries of S-cluster versions of the Kauśāmbī myth. Yet it is a featured term in both the earlier *alpha*-cluster and the later M-cluster.[92] I must, however,

91. With computational conciseness, *M* 1.69–70 reads, "The Kṛta yuga is said to last 4,000 years. It is preceded by a twilight lasting 400 years and followed by a twilight of the same length. For each of the three subsequent Ages, as also for the twilights that precede and follow them, the first number of the thousands and the hundreds is progressively diminished by one."

92. See Nattier 1991, 158, 160, 166–67 (both versions of the *Prophesy of Kātyāyana*); 178, 196, 242 (M-cluster, though only in its Tibetan and Khotanese versions). Nattier does not index Madhyadeśa, and does not include it as one of the fourteen key "plot components" by which she detects differences in texts and

maintain that whether it is named in S-cluster texts or not, Madhyadeśa is an important idea to keep in mind in discussing them since it is a famous and indeed prestigious name for the region where Kauśāmbī lies. In the epics and *Manu*, Madhyadeśa is a name for the Vedic heartland of *dharma*. According to *Manu* 2.22–21, it encompasses the Land of Brahmin Seers (*Brahmarṣideśa*) that is comprised of Kurukṣetra and the lands of the Matsyas, Pañcālas, and Śūrasenakas, and extends only as far east as Prayāga at the confluence of the Yamunā and Gaṅgā Rivers.[93] Not surprisingly, Buddhists seem to have had a different idea of the "Middle Region" as extending well eastward beyond Prayāga. In Pāli texts, at least, the "Middle Region" or Majjhimadesa is the "country of Central India which was the birthplace of Buddhism and the region of its early activities," and "contained fourteen of the sixteen Mahājanapadas, that is to say, all but Gandhāra and Kamboja, which belonged to the Uttarāpatha" (Malalasekera [1937] 1983, 2: 418–19). That is, it included both Magadha and Aṅga east of Prayāga (484).[94] Kauśāmbī, which is a little upriver *west* of Prayāga on the northern bank of the Yamunā, is thus within the Gaṅgā–Yamunā doab, which we may take as the contested real heartland of *both* Madhyadeśas. Thus if twelve years is now the *dharma*'s hinge of time, Madhyadeśa—especially as so variously conceived—has for some time now been its pivotal place. Yet if we begin with the *alpha*-cluster, we begin with an incongruity, since the *alpha*-cluster allows us to envision an original Kauśāmbī myth centered on a "Middle Region," with Kauśāmbī in it, that is not in the center but the east, with invading Greek, Śaka, and Parthian kings having lodged themselves respectively in the north, south, and west. The S-cluster removes this incongruity by giving Kauśāmbī an actual "Middle Region" position, even if it apparently does not give it a Madhyadeśa location by name. Indeed, it would be locating the births of Śiṣyaka and Sūrata in Paṭaliputra, the former capital of Aśoka, within the Buddhist Madhyadeśa.

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text-groups (210). It is also not mentioned in Lamotte's translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* account. The S-cluster's redactors may have left it unmentioned because they were from that area themselves. If so, my very tentative hypotheses would be that centers get more interesting when described from afar (as would be the case with the Bactrian perspective of the α-cluster). See Turner 1973 on "the center out there."

93. *Manu* includes it within Āryavarta, which covers north India from ocean to ocean. See chapter 5 § B and n. 33, and chapter 4 § B.1.d.i on Kuru country in the Pāli canon. Cf. Macdonell and Keith [1912] 1967, 2: 125–27.

94. Majjhimadesa "extended in the east to the town of Kajaṅgala, beyond which was Mahāsāla" (Malalasekera [1937] 1983, 418); these towns are less easy to locate (see *Idem*, 1: 481–82 on Kajaṅgala). Cf. T. W. Rhys Davids 1904; Parasher-Sen 2006, 439–40 on the Pāli *Majjhimadesa* as *ārya* versus other regions as *milakkha* (= Skt. *mleccha*) and "said to abound in ignorant peoples."

5. Here Nattier has given us the key to understanding the *alpha*-cluster's geographical orientation by alerting us to the likely Bactrian perspective and "outpost mentality" (1991, 162) of the *Prophesy of Kātyāyana*. In contrast, the mentality behind the S-cluster is that of the predominant conservative Nikāya school(s) of central north India, that is, of Madhyadeśa itself: the Mūlasarvāstivādins and Sarvāstivādins. Indeed, one should notice that the one sure sign of Brahmanical impingement now comes from this Buddhist Madhyadeśa's further eastern domain: Śiṣyaka is the Magadha-born son of a Brahmin named Agnidatta, "Given by Agni," the Brahmanical god of fire. Whatever one makes of this likely sign of trouble, Śiṣyaka's *dharma*-ending joust with Sūrata will be between two monks from Magadha.
6. The *Saṃyuktāgama* mentions Tuṣāra or "Kushan" as a fourth invading king. In this text and this one alone, "Kushan" will rule in the east, seemingly overlapping the rule of King Mahendrasena in Kauśāmbī, also in the east, until Mahendrasena's son, prince Duṣprasaha, kills all the invading kings. For Nattier, "The presence of this obvious interpolation provides one piece of evidence that the *Saṃyukta-āgama* version is not the oldest version of the story" (1991, 152 n. 16). Agreed, a story with the three kings is older. But this text places this detail in the Buddha's most prestigious canonical discourses or *sūtras*.[95] I take it as the tip of an iceberg.

My view is that the Kauśāmbī myth begins in the *alpha*-cluster as a story centered on northwest India reflecting the impact of incursions there first by Greeks, Śakas, and Parthians, all of whom are also mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* and *Manu*. However, since these kings not only invade the northwest but have also located themselves in the north, south, and west of India, the myth probably already reflects a geography of Kuṣāṇa rule in the area defined by those boundaries, and perhaps not yet extending into a Madhyadeśa inclusive of the east.[96] The *Saṃyuktāgama* version, however, in interpolating the fourth king

95. See Chappell 1980, 128: "probably the oldest version of the story," on which Nattier comments, "his reasoning may be that since the *āgamas* are among the oldest layers of Buddhist canonical literature," it would likely "be a relatively ancient version of the tradition" (1991, 150 and n. 10). We cannot say whether the *Saṃyuktāgama* version made this alteration before or after the *Aśokavādāna* versions, which keep things to three kings; it could still be the oldest text in the S-cluster. In any case, although the *avadāna* and *Mahāvibhāṣā* versions also cast the myth as the word of the Buddha, a version in the *Saṃyuktāgama*, where it is placed amid the Buddha's most prestigious canonical discourses or *sūtras*, would certainly be the most prestigious version, and thus call for interpretation on this striking point of difference.

96. As Nattier says, "archetype α—which is the only version I am suggesting was produced under Kushan rule—clearly contained a list of three kings" (1991, 227 n. 25).

and in placing him at the pivotal east (along with Kausāmbī), must also have a Kuṣāṇa setting or familiarity with Kuṣāṇa rule. Otherwise, why the addition? The Kuṣāṇas' southern capital in Madhyadeśa was at Mathurā. Moreover, as Nattier says, "the addition of the Kushans . . . in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* recension does not in itself require a later date than that of the other texts in this group" since "recent research" points to the first-century CE for "the earliest Kushan incursions."[97] Yet one must separate the time when the Kuṣāṇas could be mentioned along with the Greeks, Śakas, and Parthians as invaders from the time they actually ruled from northwest to central India, including Madhyadeśa. Whereas the *alpha*-cluster clearly refers only to the earlier invading phase, yet probably also reflects the second phase of Kuṣāṇa rule as well, the S-cluster reconfigures the geography in a way that clearly reflects this second phase. The S-cluster (excepting the *Mahāvibhāṣā*) shifts the perspective by placing Kauśāmbī in the center and, in the *Saṃyuktāgama*, further clarifies that this area is now central precisely because the Kuṣāṇas have made it so. How are we to interpret these differences, and how close to each other are these two text clusters in time? Nattier has set up the problem in an interesting way by positing that the original archetype α comes before our S-cluster and by interpreting the Kauśāmbī myth against the background of Kuṣāṇa rule. But one or more S-cluster *texts* may be closer to her archetype α in time than she suggests[98]—indeed, nearly as close to it in time as the earliest *alpha*-cluster text, the *Prophesy of Kātyāyana* in verse. I believe we should see a Kuṣāṇa-rule setting for both the hypothetical original and the S-cluster. Given the difficulties scholars have had in dating the Kuṣāṇa emperor Kanishka, this Kuṣāṇa period may be tentatively assigned from his reign in the "late first or early second century C.E."[99] through the mid-third century. With these considerations, we may turn to Nattier's revealing discussion of the parameters for interpreting what Kuṣāṇa rule means for the Kauśāmbī myth.

Among the things Nattier finds to be noteworthy in our S-cluster (she includes the *Mahāvibhāṣā* in her overview) are that it includes a "lineup of evil, non-Buddhist kings"—Greeks, Śakas, and Parthians (and the Kushans as well,

97. Nattier 1991, 152 n. 17, disagreeing here with Lamotte 1988, 201–2. Cf. 225: "the best current estimate is that the Parthians—the last of these three groups to arrive in the scene—invaded northwest India by the first half of the first century C.E." In both cases she cites Frye 1983, 177–204.

98. Nattier does not rule anything out. She does not contest Lamotte's dating of "the bulk" of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* to the second-century CE (cited above), and says our S-cluster version must have emerged "during the period from the 2nd–4th c. CE" (152–53). But her outlook is clear in the way she proportions implied time in her flow chart. There, the two *Prophesy of Kātyāyana* texts would be older than the hyperarchetype from which our S-cluster derives; and the S-cluster texts (with the *Aśokāvadāna*'s version older than the *Saṃyuktāgama*'s) would be contemporary with the hyperarchetype for our M-cluster (1991, 216).

99. See, lately, Robinson et al. 2005, 76.

in the *Saṃyukāgama*), as 'enemies of the Dharma'" (154–55). In the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, where we are down to two kings without their countries being named, "The two irreligious kings will be born among foreign slaves (*Dasyumleccha*); they will be stupid and will hate and despise the Law of the Buddha." The "religious king" of Kauśāmbī "will finally capture the two bad kings" and put them to death (Lamotte 1988, 198–99). Now as Nattier observes, it is "peculiar . . . from the point of view of the Buddhist history of the region" that these peoples and kings, all of whom had exemplars (including Kanishka) who took up Buddhism, should be portrayed as "enemies of the faith" (155). Asking why this is the case, she proposes "two possible explanations." Option one is that the invaders, presumably as yet with no Buddhists among them, caused devastation to Buddhists along their routes that would have left "a negative initial impression among Indian Buddhists" that "persisted long after many" of the invaders' "descendants had adopted the Buddhist faith." Option two is that "by the 2nd century CE (if not before) the trio of Greeks, Śakas, and Parthians had become a standard *topos* for 'non-brahmanic barbarians' in Indian literature" (155–56)—an explanation that she has already hinted will be linked with "the experience of excessive ease and comfort" (117).

Given what has been said above, that even the *alpha*-cluster reflects not only the invasion by these peoples but their settling in and around India, I think that both explanations hold true for the *alpha*-cluster, and thus as well for the S-cluster. But whereas the *alpha*-cluster may harbor more of the first imprint, the S-cluster shows more of the second, and makes it more interesting. This is not because the second set of factors calls for a later dating, for as Nattier admits, "the formulation of a tradition referring to these three powers may well date from as early as the 2nd century CE" (152). It is because such a dating is well within the Kuṣāṇa period that the *alpha*- and S-clusters both seem to reflect. Moreover, the *Saṃyuktāgama*'s interpolation of a wicked Kuṣāṇa king means that it extends this "barbarian" *topos* to the Kuṣāṇas not only beyond other Buddhist versions of the Kauśāmbī myth but beyond the Sanskrit epics and *Manu*, which are liberal in applying it to Greeks, Śakas, and Parthians but never mention the Kuṣāṇas.[100] The S-cluster also seems to be more aggressive in applying this *topos* than the *alpha*-cluster, which, if it reflects a Bactrian outpost mentality, may not wish to apply it at all. Note also that it differs too from the more redemptive telos of the *Yuga Purāṇa*, which, while mentioning only the Greeks and Sakas and stopping before both the

100. For discussion, see Witzel 2006, 482–84 on *Manu* and the epics; *passim* on the Kuṣāṇas. To my mind, the epics and *Manu* are all pre-Kuṣāṇa. Cf., however, chapter 5 § C on Olivelle's later dating.

Parthians and Kuṣāṇas, knows foreigners as *mlecchas* but sees them as potential allies in history and does not personalize them through "evil" (or otherwise) kings.

With option two, we are thus back above all to the (Mūla-) Sarvāstivādins and the place of the S-cluster within its wider world. And the first thing to notice is that if this version of the Kauśāmbī myth is especially aggressive in adopting "a standard topos for 'non-brahmanic barbarians,'" it does so bowing to a historically and socially identifiable Brahmanical usage. Our task would be to interpret the S-cluster's nods to Brahmanical impingement, traces of which (including epical innovations) we have already noted, within the wider sociohistorical context of what Nattier calls the *pax kushanica* (1991, 227). Nattier comes to the flourishing of Buddhism under the Kushan rule and the supposed conversion of Kanishka with this question: "What, then, would have led the Buddhist subjects of such a cosmopolitan realm, presumably enjoying all the material and spiritual benefits afforded by the long-lasting *pax kushanica*, to produce such a prophesy of decline?" (226–27). Her answer, in accord with option two, is that "the Kauśāmbī prophesy makes good sense as the product of a Kushan environment . . . in a period of post-invasion prosperity." But her evidence is sketchy: the myth resolves matters to internal sources of decline rather than external ones; "the death of the dharma" is brought on not by "the upheavals of war" but by "the munificence of a well-intentioned Buddhist king" (227). This barely accounts for her hypothetical archetype *α*, which she suggests is her intention (227 n. 25). Though she need not have done so (the one king of Kauśāmbī in the *alpha*-cluster goes unnamed), she mentions Duṣprasaha as the munificent king in question, who makes his debut in the S-cluster: a pious Buddhist king to be sure, but also with numerous Brahmanical (including epical) trappings. Most important, Nattier does not look beyond the "standard *topos* for 'non-brahmanic barbarians'" to the wider configuration of which it is only a part: a Brahmanical mixed ethnic, mixed caste, and mixed religious (but not in any visible way mixed sectarian, in Buddhist terms) packaging that makes the S-cluster's versions of the Kauśāmbī myth intelligible. Along with its reorientation of the myth to a "Middle Region," this repackaging explains how the S-cluster, probably close on the heels of the *alpha*-cluster, makes full sense—that is, Brahmanical sense—of its Kushan environment by barbarizing the Kuṣāṇas and their Greek, Śaka, and Parthian predecessors. In agreeing here with Brahmans in the naming of foreign "others," central north and northwest Indian Nikāya school Buddhists offered an ironic indication that the myth of the end of the *dharma* was finding its own prophetic confirmation.

B.3. The Mahāyāna M-cluster and the Chinese Candragarbha Sūtra

One more cluster beckons. The M-cluster is clearly the main Mahāyāna *re*telling of the Kauśāmbī myth. Yet although it is as varied as the other two, there are reasons to focus mainly on one text. The M-cluster's main destiny is in China and East Asia, though it also reached Tibet and Khotan. In East Asia its prophesy gets tied to a system of three periods of the *dharma*, which Nattier shows is not originally Indian: those of the True Dharma (*saddharma*), the Semblance Dharma or Reflection of the True Dharma (*saddharma-pratirūpaka*), and the Final Dharma (Chinese *mo-fa*; Japanese *mappō*)—"a term for which no proper Sanskrit equivalent exists."[101] The Chinese translation just mentioned is of the *Candragarbha Sūtra* (henceforth Chinese *CS*), and I will limit my discussion mainly to it and invoke a portion of one more text in Chinese translation that can be studied with it, the "Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*" (also called the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*).

The M-cluster is later than the other two, and probably comes from the Gupta period. It is harder to discern the social, institutional, and historical bases of M-cluster texts in India, as it is for pre-Gupta Mahāyāna Buddhism in general.[102] I will keep to three points that round out our discussion of the other two clusters: (*a*) the M-cluster's timetable and treatment of the Semblance Dharma; (*b*) the relation between the core of the Chinese *CS* and its frame; and (c) the Mahāyāna rehandling of the Kauśāmbī narrative.

B.3.A. THE TIMETABLE AND THE SEMBLANCE DHARMA. Taking our point of departure from its timetable, the Chinese *CS* is one of several texts that move the end of the *dharma* along from 1,000 to one 1,500 years. The Buddha prophesies that his True Dharma will last 500 years and his Semblance Dharma will then last 1,000 (Nattier 1991, 48–49). Thousand-year timetables are found in both Mahāyāna and Nikāya school texts but typify the latter. In contrast, schedules of 1,500, 2,000, and 2,500 years are found almost exclusively in the Mahāyāna.[103] Yet the True Dharma/Semblance Dharma distinction comes mainly with 1,000 and 1,500 year timetables.[104]

101. Nattier 1991, 66, and for fuller discussion, 65–118 for her chapter 4, "The East Asian Tripartite System." See also Nattier 2008*a*, 158; Chappell 1980, 133–35, preferring "Imitation Dharma" for *pratirūpaka-dharma*.

102. See Schopen 2005, 268–69: "even after its initial appearance in the public domain in the second century it appears to have remained an extremely limited minority movement . . . that attracted absolutely no *documented* public or popular support for at least two more centuries. . . . It suggests that, although there was—as we know from Chinese translations—a large and early Mahāyāna literature, there was no early organized, independent, publicly supported movement to which it could have belonged" (author's italics).

103. A 5,000-year timetable, mentioned above, is found in a fifteenth-century Pāli chronicle from northern Thailand (Veidlinger 2006, 22–23); and a 2,500-year span is offered by the Theravāda scholiast Buddhaghosa.

104. I say "mainly" because, if I understand Chappell 1980, 139–40 correctly, Nattier seems to overlook an exception where the distinction is mentioned in a text with a 700-year timetable, the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. See Nattier 1991, 27–29 on this text and 42–58 for wider discussion on these topics.

This distinction itself is also made almost exclusively in Mahāyāna texts,[105] and Nattier says "the origins of the term *saddharma-pratirūpaka* and its pairing with the term *saddharma* should be sought in Mahāyāna circles" (1991, 47 n. 55). But the matter is complicated. I would rather say for now that we can certainly assume that usage of this distinction would be one of the important elements in the Mahāyāna transformation of the Kauśāmbī myth in the Chinese *CS*. Of Chinese translations that know the Kauśāmbī story, it is the only one to make this distinction (Nattier 1991, 37–39).[106] In this text, the Buddha divides the 1,500 years as follows:

> After my nirvāṇa, the True Dharma (*saddharma*) will remain in the world for five hundred years. Sentient beings will extinguish the *kleśas*, and the bodhisattva with *vīrya* will achieve fulfillment in the six *pāramitās*. Those who practice [the Dharma] will be able to enter quickly into the peaceful city [of nirvāṇa] which is without *āśravas*. And the *saddharma-pratirūpaka* will remain in the world for a full one thousand years.[107] (Nattier 1991, 48–49; cf. 85)

The "demise of the Dharma" at Kauśāmbī will occur at the end of this second "considerably less auspicious" period (*Idem*, 49).

Now if the True Dharma/Semblance Dharma distinction is largely a Mahāyāna one, what is it? For one thing, it belongs mainly among what Nattier calls the "'middle-length' formulations of 1,000 and 1,500 years," which, we may add, belong historically to the "Middle Period" of Indian Buddhism with its extensions into China—and it would figure to be the Mahāyāna that is grabbing the extra 500 years.[108] Beyond that, as Nattier richly demonstrates, it is not so easy to say what the distinction is about, especially since we must dispense with many "commonly held assumptions" about it, above all that in contrast to the True Dharma, *saddharma-pratirūpaka* means a "counterfeit Dharma," as it has been widely translated (67), implying "a fake or a forgery" (86). As Nattier illustrates from the Tibetan translation of the *Candragarbha Sūtra*, Mahāyāna texts may initially use the two terms as

105. Once one gets to 2,000 and 2,500 years, "this distinction disappears from view" (Nattier 1991, 51).

106. See further *Idem*, on the three versions of the Chinese *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, with a 700-year timetable; and 50–51 on the *Mahāmāyā Sūtra*, with a 1,500-year timetable, but without mentioning the distinction.

107. *Kleśas* are "taints," "hindrances," or "passions," the five being sensual desire, ill-will, sloth-and-torpor, worry-and-flury, and doubt; *vīrya* is "effort," one of the six *pāramitās* or "perfections" of the bodhisattva, and one of the concentration group within the eightfold path; the *āśravas* are the four "binding effluents or pollutions of the mind" (Robinson et al. 2005, 9–10): sensual desire, becoming, views, and ignorance.

108. See Williams 2009, 269–70, n. 12 on Indian Mahāyāna in its early centuries as a Buddhism more successful for export than for home consumption. See also Schopen 2005, 3–24.

a distinction without a difference. In this instance, the new interlocutor-bodhisattva of the title, Candragarbha,[109] asks the Buddha,

> If after the nirvāṇa of the previous Buddha, the reflection of the True dharma (*saddharma-pratirūpaka*) [i.e., the Semblance Dharma] disappeared after [just] seven years had passed, how long will the True Dharma (*saddharma*) endure after the Lord Śākyamuni has attained nirvāṇa?

To which the Buddha replies,

> After I have attained nirvāṇa, the reflection of the True Dharma (*saddharma-pratirūpaka*) [i.e., the Semblance Dharma] will endure for two thousand years. (Nattier 1991, 77)

Asked about one thing the Buddha answers about the other.[110] Nattier comments, "in this text the two terms are, for all practical purposes, interchangeable"; rather than being contrasted with a True Dharma, *saddharma-pratirūpaka* refers to "the period of time during which the True Dharma will survive. It . . . is an indication of its very presence" (78). Nattier calls these virtually undifferentiable usages "inclusive," and presents evidence that "exclusive" or contrastive ones with a "two-period system" reflect "a gradual transition" (82). If so, this would indicate that the Chinese *CS* could speak from the earliest Mahāyāna meaning.

As to the Chinese *CS* and the other texts cited by Nattier that *do* have contrastive usages for two periods of time, Nattier sees them as having "'adjusted' to conform with new developments in the understanding of *saddharma-pratirūpaka*." Yet the chronological evidence is thin here. Based on the Tibetan translation of the *Candragarbha Sūtra* where "this twofold division does not appear" (85), Nattier takes the Chinese *CS*, translated in 566 CE, to have done the adjusting—even though the Tibetan translation was done several centuries later.[111] I believe Nattier also tries to improve matters when she goes on to say that, "Even when a clear-cut distinction between *saddharma* and *saddharma-pratirūpaka* begins to emerge, the latter period is still viewed as positive (if slightly less so than in the preceding versions)" (86–87). This is the same Semblance Dharma in the Chinese *CS* that

109. He of course has this role likewise in the Chinese *CS*; see Nattier 1991, 174–75 and 219 (traced back to a hyperarchetype). Nattier considers him among "minor Mahāyāna elements" of the frame.

110. Nattier recognizes that the passage could be read as making a consistent distinction between a True Dharma operative during a Buddha's lifetime and a reflection of it that survives him. But as she says, such an "intuitively satisfying" equation has no known textual support (1991, 77 n. 48).

111. Nattier has used the Tibetan version's longer timetable, which she usually takes to indicate that a text is later than one with a shorter timetable, to explain the absence of a temporal distinction.

she earlier called a "considerably less auspicious" period with reference to its preceding the end of the *dharma* at Kauśāmbī (49, as cited above).

No doubt the Semblance Dharma has had changing and polysemous referents, among them, as we shall see in the Chinese *CS*, deteriorating times for the *dharma*. But I am not sure that it would have changed meanings in just one direction.[112] I would like to explore a possibility that one of the contrastive implications of the Semblance Dharma in the Chinese *CS* would be an intra-Buddhist sectarian one. The first and most important reason to suspect this is that it would carry along (and, we would have a right to expect, reverse) the sectarian implications we found in the *alpha*-cluster. It would thus be not so much a general meaning as a text-specific one tied to the M-cluster's rehandling of the Kauśāmbī myth.

The second reason, though, is a more powerful one. This is that there seems to be a distant but still pertinent precedent for a sectarian implication in the one exceptional usage of the equivalent terms *saddhamma* and *saddhamma-paṭirūpaka* in the Pāli canon. This occurs in the *Kassapasaṃyutta* section of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*,[113] where the Buddha tells his disciple Kassapa:

> There is no disappearing of the True Dharma (*saddhamma*), Kassapa, till a Counterfeit Dharma (*saddhamma-paṭirūpaka*) arises in the world; but when a counterfeit doctrine does arise, then there is a disappearance of the true doctrine. Just as there is no disappearance of gold so long as there is no counterfeit gold in the world. (slightly modifying Rhys Davids trans. [1917–30] 1972, 2: 152; see Nattier 1991, 87; cf. Bodhi 2000, 680–81)

As Nattier says, Counterfeit Dharma (Rhys Davids and she have "counterfeit doctrine") is clearly a correct translation here; and, as we have seen, she demonstrates convincingly that it has been misleadingly adopted in translating Mahāyāna texts. But she drops tangential hints at something more.[114] Making

112. As with the "intuitively satisfying" but unattested solution noted above, there would seem to be something shadowy in *pratirūpaka*, as borne out in the Tibetan term that translates it, which literally means "borrowed from" and "carries the connotation of 'reflection,' 'image,' or 'shadow'" (Nattier 1991, 88).

113. This text opens with Mahākassapa asking the Buddha a loaded question: "Venerable sir, what is the reason, what is the cause, why formerly were there fewer training rules but more bhikkhus were established in final knowledge, while now there are more training rules but fewer bhikkhus are established in final knowledge?" (Bodhi 2000, 680–81). The "now," of course, begs the historical question of the date of composition, for it presupposes, during the Buddha's lifetime, an anticipation of the "future" two periods. Nattier 1991, 121–22 also cites this text's mention of "five lowering *dharmas*"/Bodhi: "five detrimental things" (2005, 681) that lead to "the corruption and disappearance of the True Dharma," the fourth being when monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen are "irreverent and unruly toward the training (*sikkhā*)." The same question gets a different reply, one more focused on the training rules, at *MN* 65 (see Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2005, 548).

114. One must gather the following points from footnotes: Nattier 1991, 68–69 n. 9; 87. n. 78; and 88 n. 83.

a suggestive case that such a translation might also be right for "the sole Vinaya text in which it occurs"—referring to the *Sarvāstivādin Vinaya* in Chinese translation (68–69 n. 9), she finds it "intriguing" that "the sense of 'counterfeit' is restricted to Nikāya Buddhist (i.e., non-Mahāyāna) texts . . . in light of the fact that some we have examined use the term in reference to specific (Mahāyāna) Buddhist scriptures. From the perspective of the Nikāya Buddhists, of course, such Mahāyāna scriptures did indeed represent a counterfeit of the True Dharma."[115] Further, she admits, "It would be interesting to speculate as to what the authors of this passage understood as to the 'counterfeit' Dharma in question" (124; cf. 120).

That is indeed a deep and fascinating matter, and both the Pāli commentarial tradition and the Theravāda scholarly tradition have offered an answer. Drawing on Buddhaghosa's distinction regarding the first period of attainment when there were numerous arhats versus a second period of learning, each period is said to have its counterfeit of the True Dharma (*saddhamma-paṭirūpaka*). In the first period, the "counterfeit" is the ten corruptions of insight. In the second, it is "texts other than the authentic Word of the Buddha authorized at the three Buddhist councils," with some noted exceptions. Eight such counterfeit texts are mentioned. Three of these include the descriptive term "Secret" (*guḷha*) in their titles; three are extra-canonical "Baskets" (*piṭaka*); and the other two of are named after someone's cloud-like "roar" (*gajjita*). Most suggestive are the "*Secret Vinaya*" (*Guḷhavinaya*) and the *Vedalla Piṭaka*, which a subcommentary connects with the Mahāyāna.[116]

It is here that matters get complicated with Nattier's statement that "the origins of the term *saddharma-pratirūpaka* and its pairing with the term *saddharma* should be sought in Mahāyāna circles" (1991, 47 n. 55 as quoted above). This careful statement peripheralizes this older and clearly earliest Nikāya school usage,[117] and leaves little room to consider the suggestive sectarian and historical implications that it raises. For Nattier, with the "strong possibility that the term [*saddharma-pratirūpaka*] itself was coined in Mahāyāna circles," it is "unlikely" to have been "in wide circulation prior to the 1st century BCE"; as "a Mahāyāna invention . . . it never gained significant currency outside Mahāyāna circles" (69–70 and n. 17).

115. Nattier 1991, 88 n.83. I do not recall Nattier making this important point about "specific (Mahāyāya) Buddhist scriptures" with reference to specific texts.

116. Of course all this comes from the Theravāda tradition. It would be more interesting to know what was made of the corresponding passage in the *Saṃyktāgama*. See Bodhi 2000, 808–9 n. 312, with citations.

117. See further Nattier 1991, 68, first referring to the usage of *saddharma-pratirūpaka* in this passage as the "sole (and extremely atypical) occurrence in the Pāli canon."

A Nikāya-school *sūtra* passage does not, however, need to be cross-referenced or repeated to have achieved wide circulation. Assuming that Indian Mahāyāna authors are behind the Chinese *CS*, we do not have to imagine that they had to know this suggestive usage from the Pāli canon. Unlike the Kauśāmbī myth itself, which is found in the *Saṃyuktāgama* but not in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, this passage occurs in both. As Nattier indicates, in the "two separate translations of the *Saṃyukta-āgama*" into Chinese, one finds its conventional "Chinese counterpart *hsiang-fa*" used either as the equivalent of *saddharma-pratirūpaka* or as a component of its equivalent in both translations (86–87 and n. 78).[118]

Yet the important point so far, which has not (as far as I can see) been given sufficient scrutiny, would be that in the Chinese *CS*, it is no longer the True Dharma that vanishes at Kauśāmbī but the Semblance Dharma. Thus the Khotanese *Candragarbha Sūtra*, completely in keeping with the Chinese *CS* in maintaining a correlation between the True Dharma/Semblance Dharma distinction and no more than 1,500-year timetables, ends its version: "and the reflection of the True Dharma (*saddharma-pratirūpaka*) in Jambudvīpa will perish completely" (Nattier 1991, 193). In contrast, again in accord with its nondistinction on this matter and 2,000-year timetable, the Tibetan version ends with, "At that time, on that occasion, the True Dharma (*saddharma*) in Jambudvīpa will completely disappear" (250). To invert the usual saying, this is a non-distinction with a difference.

B.3.B. CORE AND FRAME. This brings us to our second topic: the frame-core relation in the Chinese *CS*.[119] In brief, while one can find many clear indications that the M-cluster builds directly from the S-cluster's epical innovations,[120] it seems to smooth out the overall story, remove doubt wherever possible over questionable motivations,[121] drop some Brahmanical themes, and omit the

118. Nattier also remarks that Rhys Davids' translation "counterfeit doctrine" is appropriate not only for the singular Pāli usage but for "its Chinese parallels" (1991, 89 n. 93). Indeed, whether or not we posit Indian authors behind the crucial passage in the Chinese *CS*, we need only assume that its originator—perhaps even its translator—connected dots from the *Saṃyuktāgama*. I see no compelling reason to challenge the Indian origins of passages in the Chinese CS's telling of the Kauśāmbī myth. For one thing, the discovery of "a small fragment of a Sanskrit manuscript of the *Candragarbha-sūtra*" allegedly "corresponding to" the Chinese *CS* version "demonstrates that at least a part of that text once existed in Sanskrit" (Nattier 1991, 174 and n. 70).

119. Nattier's view is helped by the fact that each version frames its core differently (1991, 177). But as the first frame to have been translated, that of the Chinese *CS* would be the best candidate to have originated in India.

120. The Tibetan version includes traits of Duṣprasaha that help to explain his prodigious power: an iron mole in his forehead; an iron body in battle (Nattier 1991, 244). The summary does not mention these traits, so the Chinese *CS* may not include them. They are reminiscent of *Mahābhārata* folklore about Duryodhana, although one could find such traits in other "iron age" heroes.

121. Śiṣyaka seems to offer his words in good faith. Duṣprasaha is redeemed. Similarly, rather than dying, King Mahendrasena abdicates the throne (Nattier 1991, 179), in the Tibetan version to renounce the world (224).

Aśokāvadāna setting of the quinquennial assembly. And while it keeps the basic spatial orientation with selective modifications,[122] it changes the temporal one. In principle, the hinge period is now the 1,000-year Semblance Dharma. Rather than finding out that he has a twelve-year window[123] in which to forestall the end of the Dharma, Duṣprasaha is concerned for himself, and learns that he should ask the *tripiṭaka*-master Śiṣyaka about "the karmic effects of his military campaigns." At Śiṣyaka's recommendation, he "invites all the monks in Jambudvīpa to Kauśāmbī, but many are killed along the way" (Nattier 1991, 179–80). The Tibetan translation indicates that they come in distinct "saṅghas," and that those who die en route do so miserably. A hundred thousand get to the capital. Considerable emphasis is placed on "all the monks of Jambudvīpa" being present,[124] and in both the Chinese *CS* and Tibetan versions that one monk has not arrived: "At this point the king develops a desire to see an arhat and is informed in a dream about the whereabouts of Sūrata" (180). Here the Tibetan version makes Sūrata more interesting:[125] the divine voice in Duṣprasaha's dream tells him that Sūrata is presently on Mount Gandhamādana—a Himalayan haunt of Ṛṣis in the *Mahābhārata*—where presumably the invitation did not reach him. Duṣprasaha should invite Sūrata and confess to him so his sins will be purified (246). He does not seem to have heard of Sūrata before this. It takes a dream to find the last arhat and bring him out of the Himalayas.

Nattier's summary of what follows is rather brief: "On the day of the *poṣadha* ceremony the familiar conflict between Śiṣyaka and Sūrata breaks out" (1991, 180). As to the usually revealing conversation between them, the Tibetan version also gives us little to go on:

> [some] newly arrived monks will ask the tripiṭaka-knower Śiṣyaka, the preceptor, to explain the Vinaya. [But] Śiṣyaka will say, "To a man

122. There are three evil kings. Unlike the other two versions, the Chinese *CS* alters one's identity, substituting Persian for Greek; but it is the only one to keep the original Indian locations with Kauśāmbī in the east (Nattier 1991, 177–78, 187). The M-cluster is apparently divided on mentioning Madhyadeśa (see discussion above).

123. Three twelve-year periods are folded into the endgame in the Tibetan translation, as if to compensate for the loss of meaning: Duṣprasaha is twelve when his father yields him the throne (in the Chinese *CS* he is seven); he fights the three kings for twelve years; and he learns that if he takes refuge in the three jewels for twelve years he can purify himself of the killings, which leads him to invite all the monks to the unnamed feast (Nattier 1991, 243–45). In coming from "the country called Paṭaliputra" (Nattier 1991, 244) to "preach the Dharma for the king," Śiṣyaka tells him its "'fifteen hundred years are now fulfilled,' and that the Dharma is about to die out" (180).

124. The Tibetan version makes it clear that, as a result of the events at Kauśāmbī, Jambudvīpa—implying the world—becomes devoid of monks (Nattier 1991, 245).

125. Without indicating his birthplace, as it does with Śiṣyaka, keeping the latter at Paṭaliputra as a son of the Brahmin Agnidatta, Sūrata is still the son of Sudhana; see discussion above.

> who is blind and has no nose or ears, what need is there for a mirror? What will he be able to see? Even if I explain the Vinaya, you will not act according to the Vinaya. To those who do not keep the Buddhist precepts (*dharma-śikṣa*), what is the use of explaining the Vinaya?" And when he speaks thus, at that time the arhat will speak with the voice of a lion: "From the time when I first took the Buddhist precepts until now, I have not harmed so much as [a blade of] *kuśa* grass. Do not say such words. Explain the Vinaya!" (247)

Śiṣyaka may still be dodging. But even if both of them seem to speak in good faith, the result is the same mayhem.

Arriving on the scene, Duṣprasaha finds "all the monks dead," "bewails the fate of the Dharma," and cremates Śiṣyaka and Sūrata (Nattier 1991, 181). In the Tibetan version, he is so pious as to say, "The arhat was my mother; Śiṣyaka was my Dharma treasury" (248). Much ennobled, he does not carry out the final killings himself or have a sudden rage. But now, instead of being rebuked by 500 lay disciples, the Chinese *CS* "suddenly has a contingent of monks appear out of nowhere" after all the real ones are dead. When Duṣprasaha asks them to preach the Dharma, he learns they know nothing about it and realizes that it has "indeed disappeared" (181). The Chinese *CS* may condense and revise a story that makes more sense in the Tibetan version. There the king's 500 ministers (the ones who were born to a rain of blood) now have "pity" for him, and put 500 fake monks to the task of fooling him that the Dharma has not disappeared. The "impostors," having no Buddhist robes to wear, seem to dress up like Śaivite ascetics: "in animal skins, . . . their hair and beards . . . not shaved" (249; cf. 181). Perhaps the Tibetan version puts a Śaivite twist on the end of the Dharma. On the other hand, if a single unreal monk could be the "fourth sign" to Prince Siddhārtha before any real monks could appear outside his father's palace, pending his rediscovery of the Dharma, why should not a contingent of unreal monks appear out of nowhere as the last sign that his Dharma had vanished?

Clearly, if we are to find redirection out, we might look to the frame. But let us already note the fighting saṅghas; the general emphasis on Vinaya and precepts (*dharma-śikṣa*, the basic training rules?) rather than on the Prātimokṣa; the mirror offered to all the monks as a reflection of their Vinaya shortcomings; and the intensified uniqueness of the last arhat who has been out of touch with the "saṅghas" as a Himalayan recluse. And let us note, along with the mirror, the dream and the closing emphasis on illusion, which may reflect Mahāyāna perceptions of reality, that is, of an unfathomable Dharma that reveals itself mysteriously and would not really be disappearing at all. As one reads in the

Vimalakīrti Sūtra, which must be a fairly early Mahāyāna text (Watson 1997, 1), "There are lands where similes such as dreams, phantoms, reflections, echoes, images in a mirror, the moon in the water, or shimmering heat waves are used to do the Buddha's work" (123–24).

Turning now to the frame, my difficulty is with the implication that it is nonessential,[126] late, and "probably" added in China. I think it was just retouched there, and has demonstrably Indian features:[127] for one, taking a page from Indian Pure Land ideas, that by his austerities in previous lives the Buddha could "make the Dharma grow bright" when he became a Buddha (Nattier 1991, 182; cf. 2003, 185–93). Granted that the Chinese *CS* frame was "added" to a core story, if the frame and reframed core were put together ("composed") in India, it might help to explain the Mahāyāna reorientation of the Kauśāmbī myth.

A bodhisattva asks the frame's leading question: How can people use skillful means to prolong the existence of the Dharma?—not, as Nattier observes, How long will the Dharma endure? The Buddha replies "that one hundred years after his death, the Dharma will gradually [begin to?] decline and disappear, and delivers a long discourse on the evil actions of future sentient beings," differentiating the special misconduct of monks, Kṣatriya kings, and Cāṇḍāla kings before the core story begins.[128] Then, once the Dharma has disappeared, the frame closes "with a long concluding section." After describing "the decline to be suffered by the natural world, human beings themselves, and the Dharma," the Buddha says "he will renounce one-third of his life span for the benefit of sentient beings, thus prolonging the life-span of the Dharma," and now pronounces the text's authoritative 1,500-year timetable with its 500-year True Dharma and 1,000-year Semblance Dharma sequel. He "emphasizes the importance of giving to the monastic community, even if the monks are breaking the precepts," on the grounds that giving to them "is like making

126. Nattier seeks to confine "minor Mahāyāna elements" to the frame while demonstrating that the core has been little affected by its Mahāyāna handling: "In the Chinese version . . . [t]he main lines of the Kauśāmbī story are devoid of Mahāyāna content" (1991, 184); "All in all, then, there is little significant innovation. . . . Despite the peripheral Mahāyāna accretions. . . ." But the frame's Mahāyāna elements would not look minor if the core has innovative Mahāyāna resonances.

127. Nattier lists eight indices by which "we may tentatively suggest that the 'frame' . . . was added in a Chinese context." The most persuasive are two that suggest idiomatic retouches such as are common in Chinese translations: an accentuation on filial piety, and looking on one's parents as "field deer."

128. Nattier 1991, 176–77 (my brackets). The full 1,500-year timetable is predicted in the frame's closure (182). Without the brackets, this "hundred" looks inconsistent with the rest of the Chinese *CS*. Nattier proposes that it could be a scribal error for "ten hundreds," and that the text was referring to a 1,000-year timetable like our S-cluster (176 n. 74). Neither is likely, and Nattier has just noted that the Buddha was not answering about the duration of the Dharma, which he gets to on the frame's far side. But note that the argument admits the possibility of an original Indian frame.

offerings to me." Next, he mentions various austerities he did in previous lives "in order 'to make the Dharma grow bright,'" which now becomes a "refrain" as he offers a *dhāraṇī* (mantra) "for the purpose of making the Dharma long endure in the world" (182). With this, "good omens appear, sentient beings of various types attain new levels of insight, and the Buddha increases the three 'essential life forces.'"[129] He then tells how to divide the merits left over from the offerings he made to former Buddhas. One part will go to himself.[130] One part will go to "those *śrāvakas* who are firm in *samādhi*, leading to liberation," which probably implies the 500-year duration of the True Dharma when arhats will not yet be so scarce. And the last part will go to "*śrāvakas* who break the precepts but recite the sūtras and put on monastic robes in the times of the True and Semblance Dharma." That is, there will be *śrāvakas* who break the precepts, etc., during both periods. The Buddha then closes by asking Maitreya to protect "these *śrāvakas* so they will not be poor," and "to prevent *caṇḍāla* kings from harming those *śrāvakas* who break the precepts." Finally, all sentient beings give his sermon a rousing reception (182–83).

Several points call for discussion. First, it is rather easy to show that the Chinese *CS's* frame gives its whole text a Mahāyāna momentum. One can see this most vividly in the redemption of King Duṣprasaha. Second, as this and other examples show, the frame is interreferential with the Chinese *CS*'s core. For instance, the Buddha's appeal to give to monks who break the precepts confirms Duṣprasaha's piety in doing so down to the Dharma's last moment, and reinforces his redemption. Redemption of a demonic king is typical of Purāṇic *bhakti*, which, as we noted in chapter 6, ultimately, like Mahāyāna Buddhism, envisions a universal salvation open to everyone, "demon devotees" included. There will be more to say about the Mahāyāna. But it is worth attending before that to the way the Chinese *CS*'s frame redescribes Indian social and institutional conditions mentioned in the S-cluster's main story.

While obviously building on the S-cluster, the Chinese *CS* appears to clear out social problems from its core to relocate them in its frame. The frame first mentions such conditions in its opening where the Buddha predicts the three types of misconduct that will begin to surface a 100 years after his nirvāṇa, and then continues in its closing to relate them to later conditions, leaving it

129. Nattier mentions the *dhāraṇī* and the "three essential life-forces" among the indices of Chinese composition, but neither is wholly convincing. She does not make up her mind on the *dhāraṇī* (1991, 219). As to the three essential life-forces, Nattier says they do "not seem to reflect any term in the Indian Buddhist repertoire" (1991, 184–85). This term does sound Chinese, but the three are those of the earth, of all living Buddhas, and of the True Dharma (182 n. 88), which are highly plausible in an Indian context.

130. Which may be enough for the rest of his life, or more likely imply that he has a continued existence after parinirvāṇa (as we just saw, it seems he can continue to receive offerings).

obvious that they apply to the core story just told. The three types of misconduct predicted are that Buddhist monks will be "more concerned with worldly success than with religious achievement"; Kṣatriya rulers will cooperate "with these decadent monks" and interfere "with them by imposing punishment on those who do not obey the precepts"; and Cāṇḍāla rulers "will conspire with evil monks to turn out their own version of the Buddhist teachings" (Nattier 1991, 176–77). The description of worldly monks is now familiar—among other things, as a Mahāyāna critique of settled life in wealthy Nikāya school monasteries. Yet these conditions seem to be general: the Buddha asks Maitreya to protect all wayward *śrāvakas* "so they will not be poor."

The matter with Kṣatriya rulers is curious. In contrast with Cāṇḍāla rulers, they would administer punishment from within the Brahmanical system of caste and life-stage (see chapter 5), which would leave ambiguities in their dealings with Buddhist monks. As many have noticed, the *Prātimokṣa* singles out one rule, the second in the most serious *Pārājikā* category requiring expulsion, where a monk is punishable by a king, and that is theft.[131] As the Chinese *CS* reads here, one could infer that Kṣatriya kings who cooperate with decadent monks yet interfere with them in imposing punishment on lax ones would do so by applying the rod of punishment (*daṇḍa*) to additional Vinaya matters beyond theft. This would involve a tension between Vinaya and Dharmaśāstra, which could extend to the fact that Brahmins are ordinarily exempted from punishments, or if not exempted, given the lightest penalties. Perhaps one may read between the lines and suspect that Kṣatriya rulers are treating monks selectively as they do with Brahmins, but not as well. They would treat Buddhists in ways that Brahmins are immune to. In any case, the differentiation between the two types of rulers has clearly stepped up what we found in the S-cluster, where the contrast was between a "good Buddhist king," presumably a Kṣatriya, and Mlecchas or "Barbarians," not Cāṇḍālas or "Untouchables." Mleccha kings are a commonplace in the Sanskrit epics, where the same Greeks, Sakas, and Parthians are mentioned most under that heading just as they are in the S-cluster. But not Cāṇḍāla kings. I am unaware of such a usage in Brahmanical literature.[132] Whereas the Buddha, on principles that spoke to equality, and

131. See Collins 1993, 370 (on the original rule traced back to King Bimbisāra); von Hinüber 1995, 33–34 and n. 72 (on "legal levels" of persons below the king who may also punish for theft, according to the *Sūtra-Vibhaṅgha*).

132. For nuances given these and related terms in Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Jain literatures of our period, see Parasher-Sen 2006, 431–42. She notes that in using the word *mleccha*, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* introduces a distinction "between the traditional *kṣatriyas* and the new ruling elites" that differed from the Brahmin/Kṣatriya distinction of interest to the epics (433). But the new distinction was still made with the term *mleccha*, not *cāṇḍāla*.

against Brahmanical ideas of hierarchy based on purity, once exalted the Khattiya over the Brahmin to defend Buddhist monks from the charges of Brahmins like Ambaṭṭha and Pokkharasāti that they were Cāṇḍālas scoured from the soles of Brahmā's feet, he is now projecting as Buddhist a view that seems to go beyond Brahmanical texts in naming foreign non-Kṣatriya kings Cāṇḍālas.[133]

It is thus the misconduct of Cāṇḍāla rulers that is most intriguing. Unlike Kṣatriya rulers, they are faulted on both sides of the frame. As we noted, the Buddha's final appeal is to ask Maitreya "to prevent *caṇḍala* kings from harming those *śrāvakas* who break the precepts." Whereas a Kṣatriya king like Duṣprasaha is now expected to act within the Law, even if it is not Vinaya law, in punishing monastic laxity, Cāṇḍāla rulers lack such restraints. If we are to look for "Cāṇḍāla" kings who "harm" monks, we should probably look past the *pax kushanica*. The most likely background would be the invasions by the Hepthalite Huns ("White Huns"), who, led by Toramana and his notoriously brutal son Mihirakula, devastated monasteries in northwest India and Bactria and may have provided an impetus for the composition of this version of the Kauśāmbī myth as well as its transmission in the Chinese *CS* to northern China, which also knew Hepthalite invasions and had barbarian kings in the same period.[134] If so, the Chinese *CS* would have been composed in the late fifth- or early sixth-century CE, a time of rapid late-Gupta decline, yet still early enough for its Chinese translation in 566.[135]

But the Chinese *CS* also draws a text-historical association with Cāṇḍāla rulers that could have had nothing to do with persecution: they "will conspire with evil monks to turn out their own version of the Buddhist teachings." This cannot be squared with Hephthalite kings who never converted to Buddhism,

133. As Schopen has shown (2006, 344–47), Buddhists of the Middle Period, both in the Mūlasarvāstivādin-vinaya and in a Mahāyāna text called the Ratnamegha Sūtra, had also gone beyond Brahmanical usage of calling others Cāṇḍālas to using this name to differentiate among, and even to identify, themselves. Schopen shows this with reference to Vinaya rules made to "sanitize" the early Buddhist *śmāśānika* practice of wearing cloth from corpses. But as he says, "This same pattern" holds for "the monastic disposal of the dead and monastic inheritance law, and could easily be demonstrated in regard to a very broad range of other, seemingly more mundane matters, like washing bowls and providing drinking water."

134. I am condensing a complex matter on which Nattier offers a somewhat different view in debate with Ryūjō Yamada, who holds that the Hephthalite invasions were a spur to the composition of the Chinese *CS* (see Nattier 1991, 110–17, 128, 164). While Nattier is convincing in disputing other views of Yamada's, her three points to contest this one are not convincing: that the Kauśāmbī story was already circulating for centuries before the Hephthalite invasion; that it "exhibits few divergences"; and that it probably had its origins not in persecution but the experience of excessive comfort (116–17). It is not a question of origins but of a reorientation. Thapar 2002, 286–87 gives a death-date of "about 542" for Mihirakula.

135. Note that Nattier posits three intermediary hyperarchetypes δ, ζ, and θ between our S-cluster and the Chinese *CS* (1991, 216–18). I think, however, that the transformations they introduce can be sufficiently accounted for as reorientations from within the texts that we have.

and does seem to hark back to the *pax kushanica*. Sure enough, we find the Kauśāmbī prophesy tied to a negative depiction of the Kuṣāṇas in the most prestigious version of the S-cluster, the one in the *Saṃyuktāgama* where "Kushan" is the fourth invading barbarian king.

Yet if the Chinese *CS* is recalling the Kuṣāṇas, or more precisely this king named Kushan, and thus probably Kanishka, in the Cāṇḍāla role of conspiring "with evil monks to turn out their own version of the Buddhist teachings," what teachings would they be? If it is a reference to texts, there would seem to be only three possibilities: Mahāyāna texts, Nikāya school texts, or both. The first suspicion would be that we have a reference to new Mahāyāna sūtras written during or around the Kuṣāṇa period. But that is the least likely solution since the Chinese *CS* is unlikely to be casting aspersions on Mahāyāna sutras—especially in its frame, where its Mahāyāna allegiance is so explicit. The second possibility is more promising but also more complicated. The reference could hold a negative memory of Kanishka, whose reputation connects him with a fourth council where 100,000-verse commentaries were supposedly composed for each of the three baskets of the Sarvāstivādin tripiṭaka.[136] From this angle, the "evil monks" would be Sarvāstivādins. Also, if one asked which side would be likelier to garner royal support, this too might favor a Nikāya school candidacy since up to the Gupta period there is so little evidence of institutional support for the Mahāyāna. If we take this route, the Chinese *CS* could even be using the True Dharma/Semblance Dharma distinction to turn the tables on the main Nikāya school usage of this distinction in the *Saṃyuktāgama*, where the "Counterfeit Dharma" would probably have been taken (whatever the plausibility of such a text-historical reading) to refer to the Mahāyāna. Indeed, the Chinese *CS* says Cāṇḍāla rulers will conspire in turning out "Buddhist teachings": not "false teachings," and not "sūtras." It could refer to the massive Sarvāstivādin commentaries or to the voluminous *Mūlasarvāstivadin-vinaya*! This looks to me like the deepest level of allusion, but the third possibility must also be considered. Buddhist literature also viewed Kanishka "as an outstanding patron of the Dharma" under whom the whole "Buddhist community . . . flourished" (Nattier 1991, 155, 226). One might also suspect that the Chinese *CS* is "Catholic" and prophetic enough to view textual complicity with barbarian power as a general problem. In this regard, one might recall that both northern Nikāya schools and the Mahāyāna were developing open canons during the Kuṣāṇa period, and that these were becoming interpenetrating canons in the

136. Lamotte 1988, 585–86. This is not to assume that this reputation is historically accurate. As Nattier 2008*a*, 4 cautions, such an assumption, given Kanishka's varied profile in different texts and by different schools, "would be very dangerous."

process of reaching China (and later Tibet). If the Chinese *CS* is as late and "Catholic" as I have been suggesting, it could be that its author was content to bury old squabbles and to veil his allusions to them.

B.3.C. A MAHĀYĀNA RETELLING. This brings us to our last window on the Kauśāmbī myth in the Chinese *CS*, on which the frame clearly has more to tell us about its Mahāyāna rehandling. Let us look to the bodhisattva Moon-Lamp's opening question, How can people use skillful means—*upāya-kauśalya*, the capstone, and complement to the six perfections of the Bodhisattva path—to prolong the Dharma's existence? This is not only a leading question but a wraparound one—in at least one sense, and I will say two. It is clearly a wraparound question in the sense that the Buddha answers it directly on the other side of the frame. After telling the Kauśāmbī story, he uses skillful means in what Nattier calls his "heroic efforts" to prolong the Dharma by shaving off a bit of his life span and offering a *dhāraṇī* (Nattier 1991, 184). But I think it is also a wraparound to a Mahāyāna reorientation of the Kauśāmbī myth itself. On this, despite concluding that "the Kauśāmbī story does not exhibit any major deformations in plot due to changing historical circumstances," Nattier seems to agree: "when the story finally begins to appear in Mahāyāna contexts the authors seem rather uncomfortable with its negative conclusions, and show signs of attempting to step back from the finality of the extinction of the Dharma that it portrays" (223–24). This is a good formulation, but more needs to be said.

The wraparound question takes us not only to the Buddha's "heroic efforts" but prompts the Kauśāmbī prophesy itself, which, in the mode of Mahāyāna storytelling, is itself an exhibit of using narrative "reality effects" as skillful means.[137] Given the trenchant dialogue in the *alpha*-cluster and the epical and demonic innovations of the S-cluster, the Chinese *CS* is a surprisingly compassionate, or perhaps better, indulgent text. If there is one message it gives over and over again, both in the frame and core, it is the merit of giving to monks who break the precepts. As the Buddha says in the frame, giving to them is like giving to me. Clearly this applies to giving both during the True and Semblance periods of the Dharma, and implicitly to both Nikāya school and Mahāyāna monks. But with Moon-Lamp and Candragarbha as the Kauśāmbī myth's new bodhisattva interlocutors, it also bears on the Buddha's austerities in former lifetimes in the presence of previous Buddhas, since the Chinese *CS* is set against the foreground of the Buddha's soon becoming a previous Buddha

137. See Lopez 1993; the classic *dharma* narrative "fiction" as skillful means is the *Lotus Sūtra*'s parable of the burning house.

himself. Just as the Buddha has merits to spare from his previous lives as a bodhisattva, the bodhisattvas in his audience could contemplate having the same in future *kalpas* or aeons. It cannot be incidental that the story of the last arhat now features two listening bodhisattvas. The Buddha is telling how Bodhisattvas using skillful means could prolong the Dharma past the end of the Dharma. This could be one of the reasons for the audience's final applause.[138]

So far I have offered this interpretation of the Chinese *CS*'s rehandling of the Kauśāmbī myth inferentally from the text's own Mahāyāna logic. I believe the proposed connections are valid, but that they would look more persuasive if there were a Mahāyāna version of the Kauśāmbī myth that made these points less subtly. On the main point, there is. Of three Mahāyāna versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* translated into Chinese between 410 and 435 CE, one of them, probably the second translated (between 414 and 421), contains what Nattier calls "a brief retelling of the Kauśāmbī story" that "is framed by the statements that 'the Three Jewels manifest disappearance but this also is not permanent extinction,' and 'My True Dharma is not really extinct! At that time [Kauśāmbī] will have 120,000 bodhisattvas who will righteously uphold the teaching'" (Nattier 1991, 223 n. 17). Chappell gives some of the context:

> the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* depicts the death of the Arhat who teaches the True Dharma, and the harm which is suffered by 600 monks. But in response to the lament by the common people that the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* depicts the death of the Arhat who teaches the True Dharma, and the teaching of the Buddha is destroyed, it reports the Buddha saying: "My True Dharma really was not destroyed! At that time their country had 120,000 various bodhisattvas who righteously upheld my teaching." Later,[139] Kāśyapa explains to the multitude that they should not be anxious or filled with remorse. "Earthly existence is not empty. The Tathāgata always exists without changing, and the Dharma and Sangha as well." (Chappell 1980, 140)

There are several striking differences here from what one finds in the Chinese *CS*. One is that the Chinese *CS* does not formulate the Dharma's perpetuation in relation to the Three Jewels (the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha); rather the

138. Another would be the appeal this text would have in Chinese circles that developed the *mo-fa* doctrine of the Latter Day Dharma (Nattier 1991, 90–118). As Nattier says, while "Chinese writers" continued to make "fairly modest" estimates of the duration of the True and Semblance Dharmas, with the introduction of a *mo-fa* lasting a myriad or 10,000 years, "Chinese authors conveyed the distinct impression that the era of the final dharma was here to stay" (2008*a*, 157).

139. Does "later" mean after the Kauśāmbī story is told? After the Buddha's death?

Buddha increases the three "essential life forces" (of the earth, all living Buddhas, and the True Dharma). But this, a least in theory, is a two-thirds overlap, and the Chinese *CS* is surely also hinting at the perpetuation of a Bodhisattva Saṅgha. Another difference, apparently, is the Buddha's use of the past tense to describe Kauśāmbī not so much as a prophesy but as something that will have happened. Further, it is not the Semblance Dharma that disappears with the last arhat but the True Dharma itself. Indeed, it appears that the Semblance Dharma continues after Kauśāmbī. According to Chappell, "after the True Dharma disappears and there is the Imitation Dharma, the Three Jewels only appear to die."[140] This raises the fascinating possibility that a Mahāyāna text would correlate its own continuation with the Semblance Dharma! I would suggest that this is not improbable as one Mahāyāna interpretation—a positive and appropriative one—of the Semblance Dharma, which the Chinese *CS* itself portrays as a *dharma* that works through dreams, mirrors, illusions, and skillful fictions.[141]

Most important, though, is that this Mahāyāna retelling of the Buddha's last journey and final conversations seems to give him the same monastic travelling companions he has in Nikāya school versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (or Pāli *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*). Although there will be 120,000 bodhisattvas to righteously uphold the teachings in Kauśāmbī country after the demise of the True Dharma, no bodhisattvas seem to have been added to the entourage attending the Buddha's own demise—as they are to his audience in the Chinese *CS*. The conclusive point is thus the same. In one way or another, with the passing of the last arhat and also of Śiṣyaka with his disciples,[142] there will be bodhisattvas to continue the Dharma, which means, of course, the Mahāyāna. Clearly the arhat is no longer what is primary. He is what *was* primary. With all due respect to arhats, the Mahāyāna can get along without them. Their days are numbered, at least in East Asian Buddhism. Here again we find an ironic indication that the myth of the end of the *dharma* would find its own prophetic confirmation.

C. The *Yuga Purāṇa* and the Kauśāmbī Myth

We are left with the following questions: Does this study of the Kauśāmbī myth (henceforth KM) reinforce our interpretation of the *YP*? How do the *YP* and the

140. Chappell 1980, 140, with "Imitation Dharma" being his translation of *saddharma-prātirūpaka*.

141. Nattier characterizes this text as offering "a fervent defense of the docetic view of the Buddha" (1991, 39).

142. See Nattier 1991, 215 n. 8: the brief versions of the Kauśāmbī myth in the *Mahāyāna Sūtra* and the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* share a detail not found elsewhere: that "the tripiṭaka-master [i.e., Śiṣyaka] is described as having five hundred followers." Chappell mentions the harm "suffered by 600 monks" (as quoted above).

KM relate to each other, and what light might they shed mutually and differentially on *dharma* over time? We have made our central question that of *dharma*'s entanglement not only with terminologies of cosmological time but with the relation of such concepts to change and duration in history.

1. Although the *YP* and KM each predict events against the background of Greek and Śaka incusions, no version of the KM would be likely to know the *YP*, especially if the earliest *alpha*-cluster version of the KM was written from a Bactrian perspective. We may thus rule out a direct relation between the two narratives.
2. In predicting events, the *YP* is a once-and-for-all short text, apparently largely forgotten, with no elaborations. As the history it describes recedes, that history gets left behind in the astrological treatise that predicted it. In the KM, although the names and number of the invading kings change, the myth keeps its structure. Thanks to its distance from the historical events it mythifies, the invading kings, from the beginning, have had time to become barbarian ethnonynms. In contrast with the *YP*, the barbarian kings come to be stupid enemies of the faith rather than potential allies or contributors to a divine plan.
3. The *YP* and KM have overlapping geographies. Each begins from north-central India: the KM in Kauśāmbī; the *YP* in areas that would surround and include Kauśāmbī (which, however, the *YP* does not specifically name). Yet they are oriented in totally different directions. The *YP* is oriented eastward toward a Magadha transitioning from power and preeminence to decline, and south into the Deccan and the Kāverī area. It thereby takes in a vision of the whole subcontinent. The KM, after beginning from a possibly Bactrian perspective, introduces a central north Indian and eastward Magadha focus only in the S-cluster, which has its monastic protagonists Śiṣyaka and Sūrata come from Magadha. This suggests a sense of Magadha as by now a region in decline, and notably so, for Buddhists. Otherwise the KM's focus remains on the northwest, where it positions events to take Buddhism out of India into China and Tibet.
4. The *YP* and the KM each appear to be somewhat atypical of their traditions' treatments of history: the brahmanical text for being the more historical; the Buddhist ones for being more mythical in treating the same events. The *YP* builds up to the Yavana and Śaka incursions as real ex eventu prophesy, and describes them with surprising historical immediacy. In contrast, all versions of the KM

use ex eventu prediction as a trope. Its prophesized history is entirely fictionalized. Whereas a Pañcāla–Mathurā–Yavana alliance against Magadha has historical plausibility, a *simultaneous* alliance of Yavana, Śaka, and Parthian kings to invade Kauśāmbī is a purely retrospective imaginary.

5. While not naming Yavana and Śaka kings, the *YP* describes them as separately invading peoples in a contentious historical setting, envisioning possibilities of tactical alliances and strategies of retreat to southern safe havens. While its strategies of retreat have reminded us of the *Mahābhārata*'s Rāma Jāmadagnya myth and Vyāsa's Kali *yuga* prophesy near the end of the *Harivaṃśa*, its tactical alliances remind us of these two texts overlapping central story. The KM names only its foreign kings, and fictitiously. When, from the S-cluster on, the KM starts naming the Kauśāmbī king, it gives him no strategic possibilities. His sole preoccupation is with Buddhist monks, and in the M-cluster, he shows some interest in their texts.
6. In contrast to the interest that the Buddhist texts have in kings, the *YP*, once one is past its predictions about of the *Mahābhārata* war and into its prophesied history, gives no pivotal role to any king (like Duṣprasaha). This may reflect the relative importance attributed to royal sponsorship of texts by the two traditions in this period, and reinforce our explanation of why attempts by modern scholars to find kings (or at least big kings) as patrons behind early Brahmanical *dharma* texts like the *YP* and the *Mahābhārata* have been so unproductive. Big Brahmanical kings were at best still just wishful thinking. Likewise, if *Manu* needed a king to sponsor it, why give such a strange prescription for getting to be one?
7. In each case we have found the intervention of the *Mahābhārata*. This is so from the beginning with the *YP*, for which the *Mahābhārata* is certainly foundational. In accord with the *Mahābhārata*'s own primary generic self-identification as an *itihāsa*, the *YP* views the epic as a "history" that includes prophesy, and updates the prophesy as such by turning it over to the predictive sciences and backdating it into the mouth of Śiva. For the KM, the *Mahābhārata* is of no impact on the *alpha*-cluster. But the S-custer fills itself out with likely *Mahābhārata* allusions. The S-cluster introduces *Mahābhārata* themes principally around its 1,000-year "age" with its twelve-year hinge and its evident recentering of the KM in a Buddhist "*madhyadeśa*." But such *yuga*-shaped contouring recedes in the M-cluster. While the Tibetan *CS* recalls something like the *yuga* sequence cast in terms of metals more

like the Greek ages than Brahmanical *yugas*, it subordinates this reckoning to its notion of the true and semblance *dharma*,[143] and, like the M-cluster as a whole, reverts the KM's time scale to the *kalpa* to entail vast predictions about the Buddha's life. Buddhism never settled on the number or duration of the ages of the *dharma* in handling change over historical time, and it reverts to the *kalpa* when handling the course of the true *dharma*.

8. Finally, the role of prophesy differs. Śiva in the *YP* is reassuring that *dharma* will always have its remnant as history unfolds. *Yugadharma* is always in flux, but it is entitative and uninterrupted (at least for a *kalpa* or a Life of Brahmā).[144] In contrast, Kātyāyana and then the Buddha describe a downward spiral of events that lead to the disappearance of the true *dharma*—with some exceptions for the M-cluster, where the mirror, the dream, and the closing emphasis on illusion may reflect perceptions of an unfathomable Dharma that would not really be disappearing at all. Otherwise, the Buddhist true *dharma* is discontinuous and always interrupted. The true *dharma* and semblance *dharma* may allow for shifting interpretations, but there is no interest in what I have called the default *dharma* of the Brahmanical householder, which is what the *Aggañña Sutta* rejects in calling it "not the true *dhamma*." The true *dharma* does not leave remnants. Yet whether it really ends or not, in the inevitable meanwhiles, Buddhism, unlike most "world religions," has the good graces to let the world continue with or without it.

143. A few verses from the Tibetan *Candragarbha Sūtra* may remind us of a more Greek than Indian account of the four ages, and also of the disappearance of the fragrant earth in the *Aggañña Sutta*: "At that time, on that occasion, the True Dharma in Jambudvīpa will completely disappear. {And even the letters of the scriptures will become invisible, as if one erased a conch shell.} [Then] gold will become bad silver and stone. As to silver, it will become brass. Brass will become copper {and iron will become stone.} Jewels and pearls will turn to horn. Of the six flavors of food, four—sweet, {sour, and salty flavors} and so on—will disappear. [And only] two—the bitter and the pungent—will remain. (Nattier trans. 1991, 250; {} = not found in every version).

144. Published too recently to have been included in this discussion, but intriguingly pertinent, I believe, to this entitative aspect of *yugadharma*, is Kloetzli 2010, 584, 615–18 on the *yuga* as the "joining" of the days of men and days of the gods. "The destinies of men seem intertwined and joined with the gods of each age. The result is four societies defined wholly by number" (608), which he compares to the four societies in Plato's *Republic*: timarchy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny (618).

8

Women's *Dharma*

Śāstric Norms and Epic Narratives

As mentioned in the last chapter, toward the end of its discussion of the *Yuga Purāṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*'s main story tells of a crisis of six generations, of which the two sets of vying cousins, the five Pāṇḍavas and the hundred Kauravas, make up the fourth. As I indicated, if one wants to speak of "invention," one must do so with respect to those six generations in full, beginning with the intervention into the *Mahābhārata's* main dynastic line by the Goddess Gaṅgā. I also mentioned that the epic poets extract plausible historical data from the Vedic canon to trace their *Bhārata itihāsa* or "history of the Bhāratas" through those six generations into the "future" of the Kali yuga (see chapter 7 § A.4). As we shall now see, it is specifically through Gaṅgā that this thread of *itihāsa* begins to be woven into the *Mahābhārata*'s dynastic and generational time.

This book will introduce the topic of women and *dharma* against that background. The obvious point is that generations require women, and the *Mahābhārata*'s women are great, spirited, and fantastic.[1] We will thus be exploring the topic of *dharma* over time

1. Although I take a different route through this material in focusing on the women's agency with regard to *dharma*, it is worth quoting Biardeau's take on the "generations that precede those of the protagonists": "It is always by women that the foreign element of disorder in a dynasty that must remain interrupted is introduced (Devayanī, Śakuntalā, the two Satyavatīs, Ambā, Kuntī . . .), but the women are also the obligatory mediatrices of the restoration of good order (once again, Devayānī, Śakuntalā, etc.): the Puruṣa remains immobile facing its Śakti who does not stop manifesting the phases of her yoga" (1979, 125; my translation). See also Chakravarti 2009, examining much of this skein through the lens of transition in "gendered social and economic processes" (5).

through the three generations of dynastic instability and crisis that precede the Pāṇḍavas' marriage to their own fourth generation's equally if not more remarkable woman, Draupadī. As in this fourth generation, when Draupadī becomes the stake who says *dharma* itself is at stake at the pivotal epic dice match, the *Mahābhārata* women who precede her in the line can be remarkably active and loquacious about *dharma*, and especially when it is imperiled.

We keep ourselves largely to the *Mahābhārata* in this chapter, since the *Rāmāyaṇa* does not offer three such dynamic generations before its main story, does not place itself explicitly in a transition between *yugas*, does not weave itself into *itihāsa* or history, and—most important—does not envision *dharma* changing during the lifetime of Rāma, or Rāma ever changing his view of *dharma*. We shall come to such matters of *dharma* over biographical time in chapter 9.

A. *Strīdharma*

Brahmanical norms for women are set forth broadly through the concept of *strīdharma*, "Law(s) for women" or "women's *dharma*." While there is no end of *śāstra*-type instruction on the "*dharma* of women" (*strī* means especially but not only "wives"), and we looked briefly at some of *Manu*'s more egregious ones in chapter 5 § E, it is too easy to suppose that it exhausts the subject.

Nonetheless, *Manu* encapsulates *strīdharma* in a famous adage that is paralleled in many of our texts:

> Even in their own homes, a female—whether she is a child, a young woman, or an old lady—should never carry out any task independently (*na svātantryeṇa*).[2] As a child, she must remain under her father's control; as a young woman, under her husband's; and when her husband is dead, under her sons'. She must never seek to live independently (*na bhajet strī svatantratām*). She must never want to separate herself from her father, husband, or sons; for by separating herself from them, a woman brings disgrace on both families. (*M* 5.147–49)

Among the *dharmasūtras*, the "broader" *Āpastamba* has no such adage.[3] As Jamison indicates, *Āpastamba* treats women largely within "the older *śrauta* ritual model" of the "household pair," in which the wife is recognized as one

2. See Olivelle 2005*a*, 287 on this "cause celebre" verse and on *svatantra* as a legal term; cf. 9.2–3.

3. Cf. Jamison 2006, 200; on the contrary *Ā* 2.15.9, 2.29.11 and 15, giving some latitude to women.

of the "two masters" (*svāminau*; *Ā* 2.4.13), along with her husband (2006, 192). As was mentioned in chapter 5 (§ C at n. 60), *Āpastamba* also, like the *Mahābhārata*, allows that one may learn *dharma* from women and Śūdras. *Baudhāyana* and *Vasiṣṭha*, however, "quote" similar (unattributed) verses to *Manu*'s second of these three, about a woman's passage through three phases of life—in *Baudhāyana*'s case to make the different point that she lacks strength and cannot inherit property (*B* 2.3.43–45; cf. *V* 5.1–3). *Gautama*, however, keeping matters to prose, seems to have made the strictures even tighter than *Manu*:

> A wife (*strī*) cannot act independently in matters related to the Law (*asvatantrā dharme*). She should never go against her husband and keep her speech, eyes, and actions under strict control. (*G* 18.1–3)

As recent studies have brought out, these texts do indirectly attribute mental agency to women (Jamison 2006), and explicitly ascribe economic and sexual agency to them (Olivelle 2005*b*, 248–60); but they leave us with what Jamison calls "something of a paradox—that the more woman is textually endowed with agency the more her capacity for independence is denied" and the more she needs to be kept under "guard" (2006, 201). Jamison thinks that one factor behind the increase of these strictures, and in *Manu* their misogynist expression, could be the growing prominence of a "new female type, the independent *and* religiously unorthodox woman," the Buddhist and other heterodox nun (206).

We may expect women's "non-independence" to have narrative outlets and subversions. Even *Manu*, as it contracts women's worlds, may leave the tiniest room for women's *dharma* to breathe. On "Law Concerning Husband and Wife," the sixteenth ground for litigation, *Manu* begins, "For a husband and wife who stay on the path (*vartmani*) pointed out by the Law, I shall declare the eternal Laws for both when they are together and when they are apart" (9.1). And, all be it that it is problematic, "even a woman . . . can give testimony."[4] An epic heroine's stories could be condensed into, or expanded from, these pronouncements.[5] Compared to the *dharmasūtrakāras*, in fact, *Manu* does create a mini-narrative in his three famous verses. Out of Gautama's *strī*, which means "wife" in context, but before that "woman," and out of the quoted adage about

4. *M* 8.70: "When there is no one else, even a woman, a child, an old man, a pupil, a relative, a slave, or a servant may give testimony." But negatively, see 8.77: "Even one man free from greed may be appointed as a witness, but never women, even if they are many and honest, because the female mind is unsteady. . . ."

5. Draupadī, Sītā, and Śakuntalā, insofar as all three take their cases to court. Draupadī and Śakuntalā do so literally; Sītā presents her case to accompany Rāma to the forest during the "court intrigue" of *Rām* 2, and calls on divine witness in her two ordeals.

a woman's three phases of life, *Manu* gives us a full female life cycle not only with its wants, but within the "homes" of her successive families.

B. The Law of the Mother

If *Āpastamba* opens the possibility of learning *dharma* from women within the older *śrauta* model of the household pair, and the epics spin that possibility out, our questions are: Under what conditions does such spinning out occur? What do women characters really desire[6] . . . to say about *dharma* that would also be *dharma*? Let me start with this last question and propose to explore such matters chiefly under the name of the mother and call this *dharma* the "Law of the Mother."[7] Although a wife may also be a mother, it seems to have been easier to legislate for woman as wife (thus *strīdharma*) than as mother (e.g., *mātṛdharma*, a term one will not find in any of our classical sources). The Law of the Mother would, to begin with, be a name for something less articulated—at least as *dharmaśāstra*. Similarly, by the end of this chapter, we will also have discussed something we could call the "Law of the Girl," which—as the equally unattested *kanyādharma*—will have proved equally resistant to proper codification.

I first used the term "Law of the Mother" in a conference presentation about two *Mahābhārata* cults in Tamilnadu (2004*c*) to address the question of whose law it is when members of a clan that has temples for Draupadī say they worship their clan deity Periyantavar, who is none other than a reincarnation of Duryodhana, because Draupadī gave permission to their ancestors to do so, but "for only a day since his laws last only a day." In brief, Duryodhana is Draupadī's former enemy who now holds power for a day over spirits (*pēy*) who are exorcised mainly from women who are disrupting clan (*kulam*) expectations that they be dutiful wives or daughters. While Duryodhana's male priests perform the exorcisms with a clay horse that Duryodhana himself possesses, the women dispossessed are carefully attended by older women: mothers and others. My paper asked, "Is it really Duryodhana's laws that operate or Draupadi's, who sets the limit of a day to the laws of Duryodhana? Duryodhana's festival is in many ways an inversion of hers. Could one say that at a deeper level,

6. On the semiotics of women's desire, this chapter is affected by the work of Julia Kristeva.

7. Were this chapter short enough to include discussion of Buddhist sources, as originally conceived, it would take note especially of the theme of debt to one's mother that provides one of the main motivations for the Buddha to permit the founding of an order of nuns (see Ohnuma 2006). Cf. also the practice by both monks and nuns of making gifts to the sangha in the name of their mother and father, as recorded on early donative inscriptions (see Schopen 1997, 35–42, 56–71).

Duryodhana's festival takes place under the Law of the Mother?" In the discussion that followed, Mark Pizzato of the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, found the term "suggestive as a Lacanian oxymoron"—which was gratifying, since I used it bearing in mind that the term "Law of the Father" encapsulates Jacques Lacan's view that "It is the name-of-the-father that we must recognize as the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law" (Lacan 1977, 67; Grosz 1990, 71).[8] Lacan develops this terminology as a way of reading Freud's explanation of the origins of patriarchy by the Oedipus myth.

Now the type of exorcisms done in the name of Duryodhana is not done for him alone, though his are the best coordinated and probably the longest sustained. Within the same valley north of Dharmapuri, the same type of rites are also performed, at least recently, by an intermarrying clan in the name of Periyantavar-Duryodhana's wife Periyantacci, and a variation has also recently been incorporated into the festival cycle at one innovative Draupadī temple. In other words, although these rites have for some time been performed mainly in the name of a clan father (Duryodhana), they can also be performed in the name of a clan mother, while beyond that, Draupadī gives permission as a mother whose festivals make it clear that her husbands' law, reinstituted annually by the festival that reenthrones her eldest husband Dharma (Tamil Tarumar, i.e., Yudhiṣṭhira), is at some profound level also hers (Hiltebeitel forthcoming-h). Since the Draupadī cult is a distillate of goddess worship with folk and classical *Mahābhārata*s, we have an opening here to think back to the *Mahābhārata* itself as a discursive world about which we might ask: might the Law of the Mother be a term worth considering in connection not only with Draupadī but with other *Mahābhārata* women whose stories intersect with hers? For the moment, let us just note that the *Mahābhārata* is more open to such an approach than the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where Rāma's *dharma* lies mainly in upholding the truth of his father's word and thus standing resolutely for the Law of the Father. In the *Mahābhārata*, on the contrary, the fatherless Pāṇḍavas follow a Law of the Mother when Kuntī, their mother, tells them by an inadvertence, thinking they have returned with alms from begging when they are really bringing home Arjuna's newly won bride, to "share it all equally" (*Mbh* 1.182.2), with the result that all five marry Draupadī (see chapter 10). By the end of this chapter, and further in chapter 10, I will attempt to put Kuntī's inadvertence into a deeper *dharma* context.

8. I thank Mark Pizzato for his stimulating comments. I was at the time supervising a dissertation on a Lacanian reading of the *Mbh* (Custodi 2005). On Lacan, law, and legal theory, see Caudill 1997.

It is beyond my competence to interpret the *Mahābhārata* in Lacanian terms, much less revisionist ones. When I have presented this skein to audiences without having time to go into it, I just speak of a "maternal *dharma*," and would expect that for some readers of this chapter that term may be preferable. But it is striking that certain Lacanian phrases seem to be quite illuminating of the *Mahābhārata*'s unusual treatment of fathers and mothers. Let me work from a quote that would seem to give a little room for a Law of the Mother to serve as something more than a suggestive oxymoron:

> In fact, the image of the ideal Father is a phantasy of the neurotic. Beyond the Mother, the real Other of demand, whose desire (that is, her desire) one wishes she would assuage, there stands out the image of a father who would close his eyes to desires. The true function of the Father, which is fundamentally to unite (and not to set in opposition) a desire and the Law, is even more marked than revealed by this.
>
> The neurotic's wished-for Father is clearly the dead Father. But he is also a father who can perfectly master his desire—and the same can be said of the subject. (Lacan 1977, 321)

If we start with the rival Pāṇḍava and Kaurava cousins and go back no further than their human if not always "real"[9] fathers and grandfathers, it would appear that these main heroes of the *Mahābhārata* grow up under a near-total collapse of the paternal function. Back a generation to the "grandfathers" (having that name whether as biological parents or just generationally), one finds two sonless and dead before their time from martial (Citraṅgada) or libidinal (Vicitravīrya) excesses, and two still living, both great spokesmen of *dharma*: Vyāsa, usually a celibate and apparently unmarried, whose desire for *dharma* mixed with desires for the sons he has sired seems to provide his explanation for composing the whole poem; and Bhīṣma, whose vow of lifelong celibacy to guarantee a second marriage for his own father makes him a nonbiological grandfather who has perfectly mastered his desire, whatever the credibility of that—or the consequences.[10] From Vyāsa, then, they have two fathers and a lower-rank uncle. Oldest is the Kauravas' blind father Dhṛtarāṣṭra who cannot really rule and who can never open his eyes to the raging desires of his sons and nephews or gain wisdom on his own desires. His junior, Pāṇḍu,

9. In most of these cases the real father is human, but the Pāṇḍavas and Karṇa's fathers are gods. This complicates any use of Lacan's distinction between Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic fathers.

10. On Bhīṣma from Freudian perspectives, see Goldman 1978; Fitzgerald 2007. Sax's critique (2002, 78–92) of Goldman's psychoanalytic interpretation in favor of a local ethnography of Rajput filial piety, which Fitzgerald rightly rejects, has in any case little bearing on Bhīṣma's epic complexities—not least because it has so little to do with women.

after a short rule, is clearly the wished-for dead father, who has in fact died fulfilling his desires during the heroes' childhood. Once Pāṇḍu has died, the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas as parallel paternal cousins should accept paternal authority from Dhṛtarāṣṭra, since he and Pāṇḍu are of the same rank, having Kṣatriya mothers and the same Brahmin father, Vyāsa. But his authority is weak, vacillating, and incurably biased so long as his sons are alive. Meanwhile, not of the same rank and thus an uncle rather than a father, is Vidura, incarnation of the god Dharma, who can speak for *dharma* profoundly but only ineffectively since as Vyāsa's son with a Śūdra woman he cannot rule and has no authority whatsoever. All this, in Lacan's terms, would provide an ideal situation for the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas to make rival demands for their royal patrimony.

If our heroes and villains grow up in such a world where their real or at least human fathers and grandfathers comprise such an ideally dysfunctional composite of the Symbolic father in whose name they would incarnate the transcendent Law of the Father,[11] we might not be surprised to find that it is a world where a Law of the Mother could take hold, and that it will eventually take five gods to sire sons in such a family to begin to restore a paternal Law. This would not be interesting if the name of the father was always "Beyond the Mother,"[12] leaving the mother, in situations of default, to be "the agent of the symbolic father, who enforces the Law-giving and lineage-maintaining power of what might otherwise be an empty paternal function" (Custodi 2005, 123). There is *some* of that. But what the *Mahābhārata* seems to be wrestling with is that when women hold the cards in speaking on *dharma*, and men must learn and listen, situations may emerge where the Law and indeed the name of the Mother (and when we get to it, of the Girl) may be vital to the Law's realization and at least equally as primordial as the name or Law of the Father.[13] This, at least, gives us

11. "The Symbolic father is to be distinguished from the Imaginary father (often surprisingly distant from the Real father) to whom is related the whole dialectic of aggressivity and identification. In all strictness the Symbolic father is to be conceived as 'transcendent,' as an irreducible given of the signifier. . . . The real father takes over from the Symbolic father" (Wilder 1968, 271). Cf. S. J. Sutherland 1991, 47: Gāndhārī, Kuntī, and Mādrī "function almost as if they were the wives of one husband rather than two. After all, both husbands can be said to be complimentarily dysfunctional."

12. Cf. Lacan 1977, 311: "The fact that the Father may be regarded as the original representative of this authority of the Law requires us to specify by what privileged mode of presence he is sustained beyond the subject who is actually led to occupy the place of the Other, namely, the Mother. The question, therefore, is pushed still further back."

13. As with the semiotics of women's desire (see n. 6 above), this chapter reflects on Kristeva's departures from Lacan, with whom she studied, in her treatment of "the law before the Law," the presymbolic, and the abject mother (see Oliver 1993, 46–68). My own caution, however, has been to bear in mind that although Kristeva and the *Mahābhārata* can be said to be looking for ways to talk about something similar, Kristeva starts with the child–mother dyad whereas the *Mahābhārata* starts more with the child-wanting couple and the impressionable girl.

terms with which to consider the distaff side of this family through these three generations that are rounded off, from this angle, with the five Pāṇḍavas' legally extraordinary marriage to Draupadī.

To begin the story of this family's investment in a primordial Law of the Mother, we must take ourselves back still one generation further to the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas' two great grandmothers Gaṅgā and Satyavatī. The best treatments of the skein (a term of choice[14]) as a whole are by Biardeau (2002, 1: 212–38) and Brodbeck (2009*a*, 150–77), but each—for very different reasons—tends to shortchange the women. Biardeau attends mainly to their symbolic roles rather than their words, which leaves their relation to *dharma* rather schematic, cosmological, and abstract (see above n. 1). And Brodbeck zeroes in on the patrilineal males for whom wives are more interesting than mothers, leaving him to admit that in treating female characters, his categories "cannot do them justice" (261).[15] Meanwhile, with closer attention to the women's words and moves, claims have been made for two of the women—Satyavatī (by Ghosh 2000, 33, 42) and Kuntī (by Dhand 2004)—that they are pivotal for the whole epic, which they certainly are, though neither one more than the other. Dumézil (1979, 31–45, 66–71), Doniger (1995), Jamison (1996), and Heesterman (2001, 254–59) have also made important contributions on the legal ramifications of several of the unusual marriages in the series. A methodological point here: A. K. Ramanujan had a good impulse when he criticized me for overemphasizing divine–human connections at the expense of "the architectonic complexity of the *human* action of the epic" (1991, 434, n. 4). But the point is valid only so long as one traces that complexity *only in its*

14. Along with the cloth (*paṭa*) (1.3.147, 167) woven by the female weavers Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ in the epic's opening story of Uttaṅka, major *Mahābhārata* scenes are compared to pictures (*citra*) drawn on a woven cloth (*paṭa*): the outbreak of fighting just after the *Bhagavad Gītā* (6.42.25); the pause in the battle on the fourteenth night when the warriors, horses, and elephants sleep (7.159.40); Gāndhārī, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and Vidura's collapse upon hearing that all hundred Kauravas have been killed (9.1.40); Bhīṣma's closing silence on his bed of arrows, having finished his immense *dharma* talk (13.152.1); and Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī, and others seeing their slain sons rise from the Gaṅgā thanks to Vyāsa's boon of "divine sight" (15.40.20). These usages for such vivid scenes may anticipate the *paṛ* (a cloth depicting epic events) used in Rajasthani folk epics (Smith 1991, 5–9, 54–70, 504).

15. This is admitted with reference to "the *putrikā/pativratā* dichotomy" (Brodbeck 2009*a*, 261), by which sons belong lineally to a woman's father or to her husband (49–56). These categories do not pose overt oppositions in our skein, in which Gaṅgā "is no *putrikā*" (155) and "her father is absent" (225); the overall intent, even with the anomalies presented by Gaṅgā and Satyavatī, is to make "good lineal wives" (160) and find dutiful *pativratās* (168). Yet Brodbeck does imply that Gaṅgā should have a father; hints at further possibilities in the sufficiently enigmatic story of King Vasu Uparicara's paternity of Satyavatī (163); and offers speculation linking Kiṃdama (the Ṛṣi disguised as a mating deer whom Pāṇḍu killed) with Kuntī and Mādrī as potential *putrikās*, which Brodbeck himself seems to reject (175–76). Brodbeck is less inclined to invent lineage connections and merge characters' identities in this skein than he is in discussing earlier and later generations—perhaps because this is more inescapably the "full story." In any case, he grants that "characters in this plot may seem slightly independent of those surveyed above" (151), who lived in prior generations.

own human terms. Our epic's human action also has *cosmological* complexity (see Hiltebeitel 2001*b*, 267), as does its men's and women's words.

With Gaṅgā and Satyavatī on through Kuntī and the other women of her generation, we find that women's *dharma* is woven (sometimes literally so) into an artful story of increasing crisis among the males in the Kuru dynasty, also known as the Lunar dynasty due to its descent from the Moon god. In such circumstances, the men are no less interested in and representative of *dharma* than the women, but what the women have to say about it becomes increasingly decisive. Our chief attention will be on what the three generations of women who marry into this lineage before Draupadī have to say about *dharma*, and the moves they make regarding it.

C. Mother Gaṅgā

It all starts with a near trifle in outer space.[16] "There was once a king born in the Ikṣvāku lineage" (*Mbh* 1.91.1) named Mahābhiṣa who, after countless sacrifices and a truthful life, became a Rājarṣi or Royal Sage in heaven. The poets are about to introduce him to the luminous celestial Gaṅgā, her robe the Milky Way, and their metaphoric range is the night sky, where Ṛṣis, royal and otherwise, are stars (Mitchiner 1982), and there are mighty winds. The celestial Gaṅgā is associated with the Parivaha wind that diffuses its waters and carries them through the sky when "agitated," affecting the visibility of the sun and the rising moon (*Mbh* 12.315.46–48). "Then at some time" (*tataḥ kadācit*)—note this cunning narrative convention, which occurs nine times in our skein and serves as a sort of start-up and then restart mechanism—while the Gods were doing homage to Brahmā in the Royal Ṛṣis' company, as "Gaṅgā approached the Grandfather [Brahmā], her garment, radiant as the moon, was raised by the wind" (4). Now, as Gaṅgā's garment lifts,

> The host of gods then lowered their faces. But the royal Ṛṣi
> Mahābhiṣa looked at the river fearlessly. Mahābhiṣa was disdained by
> lord Brahmā, who said, "Born among mortals, you shall again gain
> the worlds." (1.91.5–6)

At this point, in a fairly widespread interpolation remarked on by Biardeau, Brahmā also says that Gaṅgā will join Mahābhiṣa in this earthly destiny. According to Biardeau, the two are jointly "condamnés pour une faute légère

16. This section draws some phrasing and insights from Hiltebeitel 2001*b*, which now reappears slightly revised as Hiltebeitel 2011*a*, chapter 13. From another angle, see now also Hiltebeitel forthcoming-g.

dans le ciel" (2002; I: 219; cf. 213). But even with the interpolation, I do not see this implication. Brahmā addresses only Mahābhiṣa:

> Having stayed long among humans, you will obtain the beautiful worlds, O low-minded one whose mind is seized (*hṛtamanas*) by Gaṅgā. She indeed will act disagreeably in the human world. When you get angry you will then be released from the curse. (1.911*, after *Mbh* 1.91.6)

It seems that Brahmā only says that once Mahābhiṣa takes birth as Śaṃtanu, Gaṅgā will act disagreeably to him; not that she is "condemned" to do so. In any case, the Pune Critical Edition does well to make these lines superfluous, for it is immediately apparent that Gaṅgā's descent is voluntary and amorous: "The river, best of streams, having seen the king fallen from his firmness (*dhairyāc cyutam*), went away musing about him in her heart" (91.8). Brahmā can be prudish, but he does not hold her accountable for the wind blowing up her skirt. In fact, he is more often prurient than prudish, and could be punishing Mahābhiṣa for ogling a woman as something Brahmā gets a reputation for doing himself. If we look back from a Purāṇic perspective, there is an emerging irony here, since in Purāṇic myth, Brahmā is often the lascivious one disdained or punished for his gaze, which he directs most famously, but not only, at the beautiful Pārvatī when she is marrying Śiva (see e.g., Dimmitt and van Buitenen 1978, 34–35, 171; Hiltebeitel 1999*c*, 68–76).

Mahābhiṣa is told he can choose his father, and picks King Devāpi (91.7). He gives no reason, but in doing so he shifts from the Ikṣvāku or Solar Dynasty to the Lunar Dynasty, perhaps to avoid rebirth in his own line which I believe could be a problem (cf. Brodbeck 2009*a*, 153–55). Meanwhile Gaṅgā, resuming her celestial path and still musing on Mahābhiṣa, comes across the eight Vasu gods smitten with dejection, their figures bedimmed (9), which, they tell her, results from their having been cursed by Vasiṣṭha, one of the Great Ṛṣis among the Seven Sages of the Big Dipper, for having come too close to him (10–13)—all of which seems to continue to have astronomical overtones.[17] The Vasus say Vasiṣṭha cursed them to be born in a womb, and, since they are unwilling to "enter an inauspicious human-female womb," they ask Gaṅgā to be their mother (14–15). When she agrees and says they can choose their father, they pick "Pratīpa's son, King Śaṃtanu, renowned as law-abiding (*dhārmikaḥ*)" (16). Since Gaṅgā knows that Mahābhiṣa has chosen this same Pratīpa to be his father, the Vasus' choice—assuming, as she must, that Mahābhiṣa will be

17. See Hiltebeitel 2001*b*, 270–71, 274–75. I pass over most of the details, but Vasiṣṭha's hermitage is on "a side of Mount Meru" (*meroḥ pārśve*; 93.6)—the "cosmic mountain" that defines the axis of the Pole Star.

reborn as Śaṃtanu—is much to her satisfaction: "Such is even my mind, sinless gods, as you say. I will do his pleasure; that is your desire" (17)—and also hers. Let us note that we are poised to see for the first but not the last time a woman's mind (*matam*) carry prevailing force in our three-generation skein. When the Vasus insist that Gaṅgā "must throw his [Mahābhiṣa-Śaṃtanu's] newborn sons into the water so that our restoration will not take a long time," she agrees again, but with the proviso that Śaṃtanu will keep one son. Each Vasu then imparts an eighth of his *vīrya* (energy/manliness/sperm) into a collective deposit for "the son you and he desire" (19–20): who will be Bhīṣma. But, add the Vasus, this son "shall not reproduce his lineage among mortals. Thus your son will be sonless, despite his possessing *vīrya*" (20–21). With Gaṅgā's agreement (*samaya*) on this further point, the "delighted" Vasus pursue their course (22). Bhīṣma's sonlessness is thus stipulated even before his father's birth, not to mention his own, by a divine compact or agreement between the Vasus and his Mother. If Mahābhiṣa cannot reenter the Solar line, he also can make only a restricted contribution to the Lunar one.

The only usage of *dharma*, an augmented one, in this first *adhyāya* of our skein is the description of the future Śaṃtanu as *dhārmika*, "law-abiding." But *samaya* is also a legal concept. It is used early by *Āpastamba* to define the very "sources of Law,"[18] and *Gautama* says, "The offspring belongs to the man who fathers it, unless there has been a compact (*samaya*)" (*G* 18.9–10)—which, with a twist, could explain why Śaṃtanu loses his first seven sons.[19] At this point at least, Gaṅgā seems to have brokered this deal to leave one son to her husband, as both he and she (at least according to the Vasus) desire. And with this, she now begins to enact *dharma* in both gestures and words. Appearing to Pratīpa out of her own waters, she sits on his right thigh and invites him to make love to her, telling him—and implying a point of *dharma*[20]—that "abandonment of a woman in love is prohibited by the good" (92.3–5). Pratīpa knows his *dharma*, but seeks other ways to satisfy it and her. First, he says, "I would not go out of desire to another's woman, nor, lovely one, to one not of my own caste. Know that to be my righteous (*dharmya*) vow" (6). Of course he wants to know more about her, so she reassures him that she is "not unapproachable in any way,"

18. *Ā* 1.1.1–2 uses it to describe "accepted customary laws" (*sāmayācārikān dharmān*) and "the authority for their acceptance by those who know the Law" (*dharmajñasamayaḥ pramāṇam*). See chapter 5 at n. 28; Olivelle 1999, xl, citing also *G* 8.11.

19. Cf. *Ā* 1.13.10; 3.18.13; *M* 8.218–21; 7.202. The *Mahābhārata* tells of many *samayas*, including the Pāṇḍavas' agreement to share treasures and their sleeping protocol with Draupadī (1.2.90; 1.204–5). Two of the first mentioned are the primordial bet on a horse between Kadrū and Vinātā, the mothers of snakes and birds (1.18.5), and the prenuptial agreement between the husband and wife both named Jaratkāru (43.28).

20. This is the point made by the serpent woman Ulūpī to Arjuna, who is married and vowed to some kind of spurious celibacy: that it is a "subtle" matter of *dharma* to satisfy a ready woman (1.206.26–33).

and moreover a virgin (*kanyā*) (7). Given what one soon learns about other *kanyās* in this skein, virginity can be renewable, and if Pratīpa's mention of "another's woman" might remind us of anything, it would be that—at least in post-epic Hinduism—Gaṅgā is the second wife of Śiva.[21] Pratīpa, however, continues to demur: "I abstain from this pleasure to which you press me lest my violation of *dharma* would destroy what I vowed" (8). But he can still suggest a way to solve the *dharma*-problem her appeal seems to present: he invites her to become his daughter-in-law because she chose to sit on his right thigh, suitable for children and daughters-in-law, and avoided his left where a wife or lover (*kāminī*) would sit (9–11). Agreeing to what she must have herself foreseen, and thereby virtually assuring this apparently equally shrewd old king a son they *both* desire, Gaṅgā says,

> So be it, *dharma*-knower. May I unite with your son. So by devotion to you will I love the famous Bhārata lineage (*kulam*). Whoever are the kings of the earth, you (plural: your dynasty) are their refuge. I am unable to speak the qualities (*guṇas*) that are renowned of your lineage in even a hundred years; its strictness is peerless (*tat sādhutvam anuttamam*). (12c–13)

Now telling Pratīpa he must tell his son that she must never be questioned, Gaṅgā disappears (14–16).

Even though Pratīpa and his wife are old, he "burns *tapas*." And "at a certain time" Śaṃtanu is born in terms that both recall his recent celestial identity and give what seems to be a double etymology for his new name: "Mahābhiṣa became the old couple's son. He was born the continuity (*saṃtāna*) of a peaceful man (*śāntasya*); therefore he was called Śaṃtanu" (92.18). Śaṃtanu's name thus introduces a "continuity" theme that we shall see unfold,[22] and rather ironically, since this heavenly migrant from the Solar Dynasty's own continuity in this line, though he does not yet know it, will go no farther than Bhīṣma. Yet as "Bhīṣma Śāṃtanava," Bhīṣma will keep his father's name as a patronymic while affecting his family's continuity in nearly every imaginable way other than by paternity. Indeed, this double etymology would seem to have been designed less for Śaṃtanu than for Bhīṣma, who will

21. Hopkins [1915] 1969, 6 has two *Mahābhārata* references to Gaṅgā being Śiva's wife, but they seem to come from interpolations. Śiva does break Gaṅgā's celestial descent at *Mbh* 3.108.9–14 and 5.109.6, from which their later (?) marriage results.

22. Cf. Brodbeck 2009*a*, 157 and n. 15; there is another etymology for Śaṃtanu's name at 1.90.47b–49. Within our skein, from this point to the death of Pāṇḍu, there are fourteen of the *Mahābhārata*'s forty-eight usages of *saṃtāna*, seven with *kula* and one with *vaṃśa*, and there is no other such cluster. The *Rāmāyaṇa* uses *saṃtāna* only five times, two with *kula*.

be preoccupied not only with his line's continuity but, at peace himself on a bed of arrows, with the "pacification" (*śānti*) of Yudhiṣṭhira in his vast postwar sermon on what we might call the continuity of *dharma*. Just to keep these ironies before us, when we come, shortly, to see that his name Bhīṣma will mean "The Terrible" for his choice *not* to continue his dynastic paternal line by siring sons himself, we might take his name Bhīṣma Śāṃtanava to suggest "The Terrible 'Continuator.'"

Śaṃtanu now becomes a young man, and Pratīpa describes the beautiful divine (*divyā*) woman who may approach him and the conditions under which she will stay with him, saying they are to be carried out "at my appointment (*man-niyogāt*)" (21–23). We must note our skein's first usage of *niyoga*, since, even though it does not mean what it will be all about by its end—that is, the proxy siring by a man who replaces a deceased or otherwise disabled husband—the terminology seems to have been adroitly woven into the skien throughout. But for now, having made Śaṃtanu his heir-apparent, Pratīpa leaves for the forest. Soon, while hunting "along the Siddha- and Caraṇa-frequented Gaṅgā" (92.25cd), Śaṃtanu saw:

> a superb woman whose figure had an intensive glowing (*jājvalyamānāṃ vapuṣā*) that was like the splendor of a lotus, faultless everywhere, with nice teeth, adorned with divine ornaments, wearing a subtle cloth, alone, and radiant as the calyx of a lotus. . . . As if drinking her with his eyes, the king wasn't satisfied (*pibann iva ca netrābhyāṃ nātṛpyata narādhipaḥ*). (92.26–28)

Śaṃtanu resumes the gaze that got him into trouble as Mahābhiṣa—and indeed, to drink this woman with his eyes and not be satisfied could be a reminder that he last saw her as a river of stars. Moreover, "having seen the king of great radiance going about," she approaches him "dallying" (*vilāsinī*) and with "fondness come with affection," as her dissatisfaction matched his (29).[23] So he asks her to marry him. Remembering now her *samaya* with the Vasus, she sets her requirements: the marriage will be "at his will," but she will do what she wants, and "I am not to be stopped or harshly addressed; . . . if you speak obstructively or unkindly I will no doubt leave you" (30–36). For him, it boils down to this: she is not to be questioned lest she abandon him. For her it is certainly a kind of women's law, but not one that many could impose, with a

23. Both "were not [yet] satisfied" (*nātṛpyata*) by having seen each other. On Lacan's view of the objectifying disembodied male gaze and the possibilities these two scenes open for seeing in Gaṅgā's musing and coyness an exemplum of an embodied female gaze charmed by male vulnerability and "the sense of seeing-oneself-being-seen," see Custodi 2005, 165–78.

codicil for a wife's justifiable abandonment—something opposed by *Manu*, who says, as we have seen, "She must never want to separate herself from her father, husband, or sons" (5.149). As their joys unfold,

> by attachment to pleasure, the king, seized [as Brahmā's interpolated curse predicted] by the qualities of this foremost woman, was not aware of the many years, seasons, and months that passed. (41)

In "not so long a time" the eight Vasus are born, and Gaṅgā throws the first seven into the water, saying "I fulfill your wish." Śaṃtanu watches, saying nothing "from fear of abandonment (*tyāgād bhītaḥ*)" (43–45). Here we may have the seeds of his eventual longing, once he is abandoned, for another wife, for clearly Gaṅgā, through the first seven, puts her motherly *samaya* before any concern for him.

At last the eighth son is born and Śaṃtanu can stand it no longer. "Yearning for a son of his own," he speaks out while she seems to be laughing and says, "Son-killer, Stop!" to which she replies, "I will not slay your son, but this stay is now exhausted according to the *samaya* we made" (46–48). Gaṅgā now reveals who she is: "I am Gaṅgā, daughter of Jahnu, frequented by the hosts (*gaṇas*) of Great Ṛṣis; I have dwelt with you for the sake of success in accomplishing a purpose in the work of the gods (*devakāryārthasiddhyartham*)" (49). Although Gaṅgā emerged from her "Siddha- and Caraṇa-frequented" earthly course to sit on Pratīpa's right thigh (25), she now speaks of the heavenly "hosts of Great Ṛṣis" who frequent her heavenly course. Her "success in accomplishing a purpose in the work of the gods" is a quite precise and early indication that the "work of the gods," which we may call the *Mahābhārata*'s divine plan, begins to unfold with a certain complexity. That is, it involves not only the gods and Ṛṣis but this celestial goddess,[24] and it will have to take in more than one generation. And it *could*—without it being made explicit—be thought to coincide with the *yugas*. The *Mahābhārata's* divine plan is thus far more fluid and extensive than the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s, which concerns (at least as Vālmīki describes it) mainly just male gods and Ṛṣis, and does little to trace a course of *dharma* over generational time. Outside its *yuga* references, the *Rāmāyaṇa* traces *dharma* over time mainly through only the one generation of Rāma and his brothers, though it hints at some laxity of *dharma* in the long life of Daśaratha,[25] and describes a lengthy course of *adharma* over time through the long career of Rāvaṇa.

24. Cf. Biardeau 2002, 1: 221: All this would have a "fonction avatārique" since Gaṅgā is doing *devakārya*, "ce qui est à faire pour les dieux"—which I translate as "the work of the gods."

25. See Doniger 2009*a*, 225, on Daśaratha's propensity to *kāma* over *artha* and *dharma*, and Rāma's criticism of this.

More immediately, we now see that what Gaṅgā has accomplished under the heading of "work of the gods" has fulfilled a *samaya* with the Vasus brought on by a curse by one of the most Vedic of the Great Ṛṣis, Vasiṣṭha. In fact, although Gaṅgā has just spoken of her prenuptial *samaya* with Śaṃtanu, there was no mention of that or any other such legal term during their premarital understanding. She had shaped that understanding, as she tells him only now, to be an extension of her *samaya* with the Vasus: "But this *samaya* was made between me and the Vasus—that as soon as they were born, I would release them from human birth," leaving it unclear how this affects the one exception just born other than to say that she has now freed all the Vasus from Vasiṣṭha's curse (53–54). Śaṃtanu would probably be too bowled over to catch his wife on this technicality, but what good would it do him anyway? Instead he asks to learn more about Vasiṣṭha and the Vasus, and how their contretemps affected the son he must think he and he alone has just rescued from oblivion (93.1–3). What Gaṅgā tells him is this: his son is the incarnation of the god Dyaus (Sky), who was cursed by Vasiṣṭha to take birth in a womb because, as the Vasus' ring-leader, he led them, at his wife's request,[26] to abduct Vasiṣṭha's divine cow (26); and that, although Vasiṣṭha shortened the terms for the other Vasus, Dyaus was cursed to "dwell in the human world for a long time by his own *karma* (*svakarmaṇā*)" (36cd; cf. 42). This would imply that Dyaus's *karma* will carry over into this human life, where we might have occasions to wonder whether traces of Dyaus's misadventures—foolishness done for a wife, abduction of a cow and calf—might have been left on Bhīṣma. Gaṅgā then comes to the closing words of Vasiṣṭha's curse, some of which sounds good: ". . . He will be a soul of *dharma*, conversant with all the scriptures"[27] (39ab); while some is bound to be unsettling to Śaṃtanu: "The high-minded one will not reproduce among humans . . ." (38cd)—which Gaṅgā repeats not from Vasiṣṭha[28] but from her *samaya* with the Vasus (91.21–22). Even more troubling, "Devoted to the welfare and his father's pleasure, he will forsake the enjoyment of women" (39cd).

This we are hearing for the first time. One cannot avoid the impression that Gaṅgā is a little free with her sources. Having finished attributing things to Vasiṣṭha, she offers a brief self-exoneration for throwing the other boys into the river for the sake of their release (*mokṣārtham*) from the curse, and upon that,

26. This unnamed wife does not seem to have any trait that would identify her as the Pṛthivī—Earth, Dyaus's Vedic wife. Indeed, note that the Vasu who most helped Dyaus steal the cow was Pṛthu, Earth in the masculine (93.26).

27. The Critical Edition follows the Southern Recension with *śāstras* (scriptures) rather than *śastras* (weapons).

28. Earlier, at 91.12, all Vasiṣṭha said was "Be born in a womb," and that is all that Gaṅgā has reiterated so far (92.50; 93.31).

"the Goddess disappeared right there" (43) taking the boy with her. For Gaṅgā to vanish (*antar-adhīyata*)—literally, "to put herself within"—is to return to her own element, whether it be water or space (*ākāśa*), since she is of course the Ākāśa-Gaṅgā. In going with her, Bhīṣma's disappearance is almost like the drowning of his brothers. But Śaṃtanu knows Gaṅgā has taken him away with the promise of a long life ahead of him. Śaṃtanu goes "back to his capital afflicted with grief" (44). Having finally spoken out to keep his eighth son even though he knew it would mean losing his wife, he has suddenly lost them both.

It is now, with these events behind him, that the narrator Vaiśaṃpāyana says he will speak of Śaṃtanu's endless *guṇas* (93.45d) and "the splendid *itihāsa* called *Mahābhārata*" (93.46cd). The *Mahābhārata*'s "history" *begins* with Gaṅgā's departure, yet also with her ongoing blessing: for thanks to her "devotion" to Śaṃtanu's father Pratīpa, she has promised that she will "love the famous Bhārata lineage" whose *guṇas* she is unable to recount in "even a hundred years" (92.12c–13). In effect, from a heavenly story moved down to earth, the *Mahābhārata* will stay largely on earth. After Śaṃtanu's "lost time" with Gaṅgā, time gets condensed into charted time along the epic's flow, beginning soon with the return of Bhīṣma. The verse on "*itihāsa*" ends an *adhyāya*. In effect, "history" begins directly after this in the next *adhyāya* with the story of Śaṃtanu's second marriage to Satyavatī, who is already the mother of Vyāsa, the author.[29] How better to begin an "invention" of "history" than by the withdrawal of the celestial Gaṅgā, whose very intervention has resolved a crisis in the genealogy that will eventually bring forth—indeed, make possible the births of—the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas?[30]

During his wifeless rule with his son swept away, Śaṃtanu makes what he can of *dharma*, but with a sense of mounting insecurity. A "soul of *dharma*" (*dharmātmā*; 94.1c), he regulated the three *puruṣārthas* in favor of *dharma* (3–4); he performed his Kṣatriya *svadharma* like none other (5–6b); he supported the ordered relation of the four classes with Brahmins above and with each class serving the superior ones with increasing devotion down the scale (8–9; 14ab); he ruled the earth with knowledge of *dharma* and attained prosperity through gifting, *dharma*, *tapas*, and truth (10–11; 17); and he kept *dharma* and the *brahman* foremost in his kingdom and saw to it that no breathing creature was slain

29. With typical recursivity, the *Mahābhārata* has begun that "prehistory" earlier with the story of Vasu Uparicara (1.57), which, at *Mbh* 1.1.50–51, is introduced as one of the three starting points from which some Brahmins learn the epic—the other two being "from Manu onward" and "from Āstīka onward."

30. Cf. Brodbeck 2009*a*, 158 n. 18, resisting such an "astronomical cosmological interpretation" while attending to genealogical matters, which the *Mahābhārata* actually subordinates to its divine plan and its cosmologically worked out sense of "history." Indeed, Gaṅgā's intervention in the Bhārata genealogy is similar to the "descent of the Gaṅgā" (*gaṅgāvataraṇa*) in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where she solves a genealogical crisis of the Ikṣvāku lineage posed by the disappearance of the sons of Sāgara. On these points, see Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*g*.

by *adharma*. Moreover, "rites then began (*ārabhyanta tadā kriyāḥ*) for the sake of sacrifice to Gods, Ṛṣis, and Fathers" (13–15)—as if they had been interrupted. Indeed, this seeming resumption in fulfilling the "three debts" introduces a note of unease. What is this king's lineage? No doubt his rites would be for Fathers in the Lunar line he has shifted into, but what about this son who, even if he comes back, will not be able to continue them by having a son himself? All this time, for thirty-six years, Śaṃtanu "did not obtain pleasure with women";[31] still ruling, he then became a forest rover (18).

Vaiśaṃpāyana now brings the flow of time back to the river: "At a certain time (*kadācit*)," hunting while "following the river Gaṅgā, Śaṃtanu saw that the Bhāgīrathī had little water" (94.21). This use of the river's name Bhāgīrathī (omitted from van Buitenen and Ganguli's translations) evokes a connection between Śaṃtanu and the Solar-line king Bhagīratha, who first brought the heavenly Gaṅgā down to earth (*Mbh* 3.107–8; *Rām* 1.41–43.6). Having now also brought Gaṅgā down to earth once to marry him, Śaṃtanu will meet Bhīṣma arresting her descent. Wondering why "this best of streams no longer flows swiftly, he saw the occasion (*nimittam*)": a stunning youth using a "divine weapon" to block the entire Gaṅgā with heavenly arrows (*Mbh* 94.22–24)![32] Śaṃtanu does not yet remember the son he had seen only at birth, who has now learned how to bewilder his father like a God or Ṛṣi by disappearing or "putting himself within" (*antaradhīyata*) (26–27). Suspecting this was his son, Śaṃtanu invokes Gaṅgā to appear, as she does: better dressed this time ("adorned with ornaments, attired in a dustless garment") and holding the boy in her right hand (28–31). She tells Śaṃtanu who she is and what their son has accomplished in his time with her: he has studied the Vedas and their limbs from Vasiṣṭha; the same *śāstras* as Uśanas and the son of Aṅgiras (i.e., Bṛhaspati); all weapons known to Rāma Jāmadagnya; and he is "skilled in *rājadharma* and *artha*" (32–36). Though the poets do not overstate the matter, Bhīṣma has clearly been brought up by the celestial Gaṅgā and educated by Gods and celestial Ṛṣis. She has taken him up to the stars, where he could have learned Veda from a pacified Vasiṣṭha, last seen on the side of Mount Meru cursing Mahābhiṣa and Dyaus to become our father–son pair; and other celestial stalwarts have taught him the texts and topics

31. *Ratim aprāpnuvan strīṣu;* 94.18c. The alpha privative has been overlooked by van Buitenen, 1975, 223 and Ganguli 1: 230.

32. See Brodbeck 2009*a*, 159 for some interpretive options, among which I stick to mine and Randy Kloetzli's, that the eternal river of time is momentarily arrested. I appreciate also Brodbeck's view that it signifies Bhīṣma's "movement back to his father's house," but see as counterproductive his notion that Gaṅgā's "father is absent" (224). She clearly interrupts the lineage as a goddess, and her father Jahnu has not been shown to be at all relevant genealogically.

just mentioned, including *rājadharma*—about which he will expound in his first postwar anthology on that topic, where he will be more punctilious in citing his sources than his mother.[33] Clearly the "work of the gods" that we have heard about first from Gaṅgā will have this carry-over on past the end of the *Mahābhārata* war. More immediately, though, this training has prepared her son to be the heir-apparent, which Śaṃtanu now makes him (38ef), even though he has been given the worry that he will be without issue. Meanwhile, for once there is no mention of Gaṅgā disappearing, leaving an impression that she has returned for now to being mainly a river. It is the last one sees her in this skein.

D. Mother Kālī Satyavatī

Four years pass with father and son enjoying each other's company until, "at a certain time, going into a forest along the Yamunā River, the king of the earth scented an indescribably lofty smell" (*Mbh* 1.94.41). Same restart mechanism, different river. Śaṃtanu is about to meet a woman introduced earlier in an account focused on her becoming the mother of Vyāsa. Outside the capital of King Vasu Uparicara of Cedi, Mount Kolāhala made love to the Śuktimatī River. King Vasu released the river with a kick, but she had become pregnant with twins, whom she gave to the king in thanks for freeing her. Vasu made the boy his marshal and married the girl, Girikā. One day Girikā lovingly told Vasu she could conceive and did the ritual bath to get a son. But this plan was strangely interrupted by Vasu's Fathers who, although they were "pleased"—presumably at the prospect of a son—told him, "Kill deer!"[34] "Unable to transgress the Fathers' appointment (*niyoga*), he went hunting, lovingly musing on Girikā" (38). In this reverie he ejaculated, and to keep his wife's readiness from going to waste, caught the sperm on a leaf, spoke a mantra over it, and, "aware of the subtleties of Law and Profit," gave it to a hawk to speed it to her. Another hawk who thought it was meat attacked the carrier and the sperm fell into the Yamunā, where an Apsaras named Adrikā, cursed by Brahmā to become a fish, swallowed it. Fishermen (*matsyajīvinaḥ*) then caught the fish, pulled out a pair of twins from it, and told the king. Vasu kept the boy, who became King Matsya, but since the girl smelled of fish he gave her to the fisherman (*dāśāya*), saying,

33. Nārada attests to a similar list of Bhīṣma's sagely sources at 12.38.7–13, when Bhīṣma gets the divine eye toward the beginning of the *Rājadharmaparvan*. See Hiltebeitel 2001*b*.

34. See van Buitenen 1973, 47: "The reason of this demand is not clear: for purposes of offering?" A deer hunt will figure again in Pāṇḍu's incapacitation to satisfy his ancestors.

"Let this one be yours!" Named Satyavatī, she had every virtue (*guṇa*), but "from dwelling amid fish-killers (*matsyaghāti-*), she bore for some time a fishy smell." Out of obedience[35] to her father, she plied a boat on the water (53–55), and there one day she caught the eye of the Ṛṣi Parāśara, grandson of Vasiṣṭha, who seduced her—by arranging for a fog to keep the Ṛṣis on the banks from seeing them; by promising to restore her virginity so she could return to her father; and by giving her the boon of smelling good whereby her new scent (*gandha*) won her the new names Gandhavatī, "the Fragrant," and Yojanagandha, "She whom you could smell a league away" (67). She was "thrilled" with the boon, and all in all she seems quite the capable negotiator (Ghosh 2000, 35–37). That same day after Parāśara continued on his way, Vyāsa was born on an island only to depart that very day himself, his mind set on austerities, with the words, "Remembered, I will appear when things are to be done" (70cd; 1.57.31–71). Here Julia Kristeva gives us tools with which to register a useful contrast: If Gaṅgā is the "sublime mother" whose son Bhīṣma will not be able to separate from her or relate sexually to other women,[36] Satyavatī is the "abject mother" whose first son separates from her instantly to practice tapas, with its overtones of gynophobia.[37]

With this story kept for now as a secret of her past, Satyavatī's "lofty smell" enables Śaṃtanu to trace her, and he learns from her, "I am a fisher-maid; for the sake of *dharma* I ply a ferry at the appointment (*niyogāt*) of my father, the high-souled king of fishermen" (1.94.44). But what is plying a ferry for the sake of *dharma*? Biardeau rightly points us ahead to descriptions of Draupadī as the boat that saves the Pāṇḍavas from the dice match by her question about *dharma*.[38] But this ferryboat is also legal: her "father who was adjoined to *dharma* had a ferry" (99.6), and, it seems, appointed her its captain. And what then is a king of fisherfolk? Let us note that this adoptive father speaks in a legal manner when he uses terms like *niyoga* and

35. *Śuśrūṣa* (obedience, literally "liking to hear") is the characteristic of women and Śūdras (see chapter 5 § E). Satyavatī would presumably have been raised as a Śūdra.

36. See Oliver, 1993, 64–65: "Kristeva takes us back to the milky way of the primary dyad. She analyzes the pulses and jolts of this primary universe made up of only mother and child" (64–65). The heavenly (*ākāśa*) Gaṅgā is the Milky Way. Though I know of nothing to tell us that it is milky, it may have some relation to the Milky Ocean (*kṣīroda*) that is above Mount Meru and has a northern shore where Brahmā, the Gods, and Ṛṣis go, seeking the welfare of the worlds (*Mbh* 12.322.8; 327.39). See chapter 6 § C on this *Nārāyaṇīya* cosmography.

37. See Oliver 1993, 61. I do not push Vyāsa too hard on gynophobia, but a case can be made; see Dhand 2004, 44–45.

38. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 201. *Tārī* as "ferryboat" means "something that carries across" to the other shore, "saves." Cf. Biardeau 219: Satyavatī's "link with the world of fish places her near the origins and she puts into the world the essential components of good order." Biardeau takes her name to mean "She who has within her all beings."

now *dharmapatnī*, "legal wife," and *samaya*. Wishing to marry Satyavatī, Śaṃtanu learns that the fisher king has "a certain desire":

> If you seek her from me as your *dharmapatnī*, sinless one, then make a *samaya* with me by truth, as you are of truthful speech. I will give this daughter to you by the *samaya*, king, for there will surely never be another suitor like you to me. (94.47–49)

His requirement is that her son be king (51). Burning with desire, Śaṃtanu says he must think about giving him this "boon" (*varam*; 50, 52, 56), which Bhīṣma will later call a "bride price" (*śulka*; 97.14).

Bhīṣma soon sees his father morose and asks why. Śaṃtanu does "not seek vainly to marry another wife," but still, he says, "I wish for non-destruction of continuity" (*saṃtānasya–avināśāya*; 94.59a–d)—reminding us, with this second mention of *saṃtāna*, "continuity" or "succession," that the first usage built the term into Śaṃtanu's own name (92.18). Quoting an adage: "Those conversant about *dharma* say, 'Having one son is to be sonless'" (94.59ef), he fears he will be left sonless if Bhīṣma dies fighting, as is his wont. But we know he has other good reasons to worry. What is he to make of a son who will be "devoted to the welfare and pleasure of his father" and "forsake enjoyment of women"? "Pondering" his father's demurral, Bhīṣma learns about the fishermaid from an "old councilor" of his father's and goes with some "old Kṣatriyas" to her father. The meeting "in an assembly of kings" (*rājasaṃsadi*, 94.68) credits the fisher king's royalty and gives further legal force to the proceedings.[39] The fisher king establishes that Satyavatī, no mere ferryboat pick-up girl,[40] is "the offspring of an Ārya who is your equal in qualities, from whose sperm (*śukrāt*) she appeared"; moreover, "Your father has been praised by him to me frequently, lad: 'He among all kings is worthy of marrying Satyavatī'" (71–72). Bhīṣma would certainly gather that Satyavatī has a royal father who has delegated this man to arrange this very match[41]—and more, that the fisherman has somehow learned that Vasu was behind her birth from a fish, and has remained in touch with that king of Cedi, a kingdom located along the southern bank of the Yamunā[42] where Satyavatī washed up with her original fishy smell. If we go back to her birth story, we can hardly be prepared for these intimations. Nothing was said about

39. Bhīṣma will make his vows "while the earth-protectors were listening (*śṛṇvatām bhūmipālānām*)" (77c; cf. 83c, 86c). Cf. Brodbeck 2009*a*, 162: Satyavatī's "adoptive father seems to know her true paternity."

40. Van Buitenen 1973, 447 imagines the father to be "the king of a probably aboriginal fisher tribe" to square the two stories and make Satyavatī "obviously a fishing and ferrying wench for the taking, [who] is obviously legitimized as a king's daughter."

41. Cf. Biardeau 2002, 1: 214: the fisher king seems to know his daughter's royal origins.

42. See van Buitenen 1973, 446: "south of the rivers Yamunā and Carmaṇvatī."

one of the fishermen being a king, and Vasu showed no interest in the girl's marriage prospects, much less her origins from him. Jayatri Ghosh wishes to make the tale more plausible: "evidently, King Uparicara was attracted to a fisherwoman, had children by her, and to spare Queen Girikā's feelings, the event was transformed into a fantasy" (2000, 34). But clearly, neither Satyavatī nor her adoptive father needed to produce credentials at that time. And now these go unquestioned by Bhīṣma who, as his father's matchmaker, meets the fisherman's two demands. He renounces kingship to guarantee Satyavatī a royal son (79); and to see that he will sire no other rival, he vows celibacy even as he says he will obtain imperishable worlds in heaven (*divi*).[43] All this is said to the celestial approbation "of the Apsaras, Gods, and the hosts of Ṛṣis (*ṛṣigaṇas*)," and earns him the name Bhīṣma, "the Terrible" (86–90).

Speaking on his father's behalf, Bhīṣma now says, "Ascend the chariot, mother. Let us go to our homes" (94.91). Under conditions brought about by the *samaya* his own mother, Gaṅgā, made with the Vasus, Bhīṣma now makes the *samaya* his father left pending in the name of this new mother, Satyavatī. Śaṃtanu thus enters into both marriages by restrictive *samayas* made on behalf of his wives as mothers-to-be; *samayas* that in each case introduce a supervening Law of the Mother that must rise to the occasion of a lineage whose "continuity" has been disrupted in the person of these two men cursed into being born into it: Śaṃtanu himself, cursed by Brahmā for gazing fearlessly (in his former life as Mahābhiṣa) up the skirt of mother Gaṅgā; and Bhīṣma Śāṃtanava, cursed (in his former life as the Vasu Dyaus) by Vasiṣṭha for stealing his cow. What can be said of this doubled Law of the Mother? Clearly the two women speak in some fashion together for something primordial that is deeper than kingship. Their two rivers embrace the "Mesopotamia" (doab) of "the north of Madhyadeśa," that exemplary land of *dharma*.[44] They speak for a primordial *dharma* sanctioned by the gods and celestial Ṛṣis. One, a goddess, descends from a celestial river of light; the other, born from a fish, comes from the terrestrial waters of the always darker Yamunā and is "dark" herself like her instant-Ṛṣi son, the Dark Island-born Vyāsa (Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa). One is called "child-killer," but where she kills, it is with waters of liberation; the other is born bearing the smell of the killing of fish, suggesting something to do with the Law of the Fish (*matsya nyāya*) and the ongoing life–death struggle of transmigration (*saṃsāra*), as well as a boat across its waters.[45] With Gaṅgā, the first

43. Since the sonless have woeful destinies, this could suggest that Bhīṣma has an intimation of his having been Dyaus, "Father Sky," or at least of having been there. Dyaus belongs to the same noun stem (*div/dyu*) as *div[i]*. My thanks to Stephanie Jamison for reinforcing this point (e-mail, June 8, 2007).

44. On *madhyadeśa*, as last cross-referenced see chapter 5 n. 34, and further chapter 7 §§ A.2, B.2.

45. On these points, cf. Biardeau 2002, 1: 218.

thing this Law of the Mother ameliorated was the punitive character of two male curses. Gaṅgā was more charmed than bothered by Mahābhiṣa's impertinence, and, given a situation where she could do no more "in person" than "love the Kuru dynasty" through two errant generations, perhaps she made up for the harshness of her first seven maternities by loving Śaṃtanu and by raising their one surviving son among Ṛṣis to be the line's highest authority on *dharma*. Now Satyavatī, definitely more charmed than bothered by the attentions of the Ṛṣi Parāśara, continues to speak for *dharma* solutions to the dynasty's disruptions (cf. Biardeau 2002, 1: 218).

Satyavatī's marriage to Śaṃtanu is over in four verses (1.95.1–4), barely enough to mention that they have two sons, and to bring closure with, "the wise king Śaṃtanu succumbed to the Law of Time (*kāladharmam*)."[46] The next verse sets the tone and terms for much that follows. It says that when Śaṃtanu went to heaven and the oldest of the two princes, Citrāṅgada (and note: we have nothing to tell us whether Citrāṅgada ever married) was enthroned, Bhīṣma was "settled on the mind (or thought) of Satyavatī" (*satyavatyā mate sthitaḥ*; 5d). This half-line becomes a refrain: first, after the extravagantly martial Citrāṅgada's untimely death, when it is a question of Bhīṣma governing as regent[47] while Satyavatī's second son, Vicitravīrya, is still a child (96.1d); and again, immediately after the extravagantly amorous Vicitravīrya's untimely demise, when the continuity of the now thoroughly defunct line will finally call for the extraordinary measure of proxy siring or *niyoga* (59d). Be it noted that Satyavatī produces sons whose rules are marked by conquest and desire, but none whose rule is marked by *dharma*—a pattern that will be replicated in her three grandsons. As Ghosh observes, the "reiteration of the phrase *satyavatyā mate sthitaḥ* underlines the acknowledgment of her decision-making role" (2000, 40). As we follow the mind of Satyavatī through these refrains and beyond, two other points bear watching: first, while the phrase "settled on the mind of Satyavatī" suggests that Bhīṣma yields to her, it also means that he and she repeatedly put their minds together; and second, that Vyāsa has told this same mother—his own real mother—that all she has to do is "remember" him (from √*smṛ*, which often harbors feelings of love, longing, and desire) should something need to be done. As the author, Vyāsa *knows* his mother's mind even from afar, and with it her desires. Perhaps by disappearing at birth with such a promise of return, he could go for a time—to requote Lacan—"beyond the Mother, the real Other of

46. The phrase *kāladharmam upeyivān* is formulaic: see 1.70.46d for Yayāti; 12.31.45 for "Excretor of Gold"; *Rām* 1.41.9. *Kāladharman* is also common in the instrumental singular, as with the death of Pāṇḍu (*Mbh* 1.116.12d).

47. Later, Kṛṣṇa mentions to Yudhiṣṭhira that Bhīṣma told Duryodhana that, when he installed Vicitravīrya as king, he "became his retainer below him" (*bhṛtyo bhūtvā hy adhaś caraḥ*; 5.145.21d).

demand, whose desire (that is, her desire) one wishes she would assuage." But of course a mother's desires may be beginningless and unending.

Just after we hear for the second time that Bhīṣma was "settled on the mind of Satyavatī" (1.96.1) in his regency during Vicitravīrya's childhood, we learn that as soon as the boy matured, Bhīṣma "set his mind (*akaron matim*) on Vicitravīrya's marriage" (2cd). Bhīṣma is minded to abduct three princess-brides for this ineffectual half-brother of his, and clearly initiates the plan—although as he sets off armed on a single chariot, it is with his (or their) "mother's consent" (*anumate mātuḥ*; 6). Let us mark this as the first point in a two-way concurrence, for Satyavatī will similarly ask Bhīṣma's consent (*tava hy anumate*; 99.17a) when she tells him her last idea on how to revive the extinct line once Vicitravīrya is dead. Etymologically we may say that their two "minds" (*mati*) lean "toward" (*anu*) each other.[48] By the time Bhīṣma has completed his "superhuman feat" (*karma-atimānuṣam*) of abducting the three princesses and is ready to give them to Vicitravīrya, we are told that he "made the decision together with Satyavatī" (96.46). Here we come back to a point made earlier that has now become more complicated. Bhīṣma "Śāṃtanava," who carries within his patronym the oversight of his family's "continuity," began this project by spontaneously making two vows that complied with something fated for him by his mother Gaṅgā's *samaya* with the Vasus so that he could clinch the *samaya* by which his father could marry a second wife. Now this second mother, his father's widow, has become his handmaiden in the project of continuity, which has begun to take on the character of a kind of weave of mutually improvised *dharma*. Two things about this *dharma*: it gets rough and discordant; and Bhīṣma and Satyavatī soon find themselves co-improvising it with the author.

The abduction of the three princesses sets a rough and discordant tone from the start. The three are daughters of the king of the Kāśis (*kāśipati*, *kāśirāja*) whose city is Vāraṇāsī (Benares; 1.96.3–4), which is apparently a capital of the kingdom of Kosala.[49] Although the princesses are being given a *svayaṃvara* (3) or "self-choice" betrothal ceremony in which they would have some choice in selecting their husbands from among the assembled kings, Bhīṣma quite literally subverts the ceremony, at least according to some wordplay by Vaiśaṃpāyana: "But when the names of the kings were proclaimed by the thousands, the lord Bhīṣma then chose[50] those [maidens] himself (*svayaṃ . . . varayām āsa*)" (6)!

48. Unlike English "consent," "permission," or "concurrence," *anu* + *mati* implies an assenting *mind*. Anumati is one of the four Vedic lunar phase goddesses.

49. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 220–21; 225 and n. 2. Kāśi might not yet be a name for Vārāṇasī, and it or its people may belong to the kingdom of Kosala from the fact that the two younger daughters are both sometimes called "Kausalyā," woman of Kosala.

50. Cf. Jamison 1996, 299 n. 38: a "pun" amounting to Bhīṣma's "self-identifying announcement" that he "formally wooed" the maidens as Vicitravīrya's "proxy wooer" (220).

Lifting the women onto his chariot, Bhīṣma is quick to invoke *dharma*.[51] But it is very selective *dharma*, and also opaque in the way he reaches the number eight in describing the legal options for weddings.[52] Just before challenging all the other kings to stop his carrying the princesses away, he recites a blur of marriage types that are "remembered by the wise" (*smṛtam budhaiḥ*; 8b)—that is, probably, sanctioned by "tradition" (*smṛti*)—building up to the eighth:

> Now know the eighth type of marriage remembered by the poets is the *svayaṃvara*, which princes praise and observe. But *dharma* experts call the bride best who is carried off forcibly. So, kings, I will carry these off by force! (10c–12b)

It would seem that Bhīṣma is interpreting this "eighth" form as susceptible to the rules of his sixth, which he has just described simply as "taking leave by force" (9c), implying the abduction of the bride according to the so-called Rākṣasa mode, which is implicitly what he turns the Kāśi princesses' *svayaṃvara* into. Bhīṣma is clearly familiar with there being eight (he numbers only the eighth) acceptable forms of marriage, such as finds its way into some *dharmasūtras* and *Manu*.[53] But the *svayaṃvara* is not among the eight these texts mention, which fits our sense that *Manu* speaks from a tradition that avoids role modeling by princely women.[54] The *Mahābhārata*, in fact, accurately recounts the same eight types in the same order as *Manu* when King Duṣyanta cites "Manu Svāyambhuva" on their descending order of preference by *varṇa* (*Mbh* 1.67.8c–9b; cf. *M* 3.21) before he praises the Gāndharva mode or "love match," by which he is trying to seduce Śakuntalā.[55] It would thus seem that Bhīṣma, like Duṣyanta, knows what he is doing. Taking advantage of urgency to make his list cursory, which may allow him to be vague about the Prājāpatya mode, he bends the Law by making double-talk about the

51. As Jamison 1996, 218–26 shows, the chariot-mounting is among the features by which this violent marriage mode is regulated by sanctified protocols found in the higher marriage modes.

52. I follow van Buitenen's parsing (1973, 228, 456) and translation of the "extremely elliptical" 1.96.8 as covering three modes (the *brāhma*, *daiva*, and "doubtfully" the *prājāpatya*) and also his handling of 96.10b as referring to the *svayaṃvara* rather than, as per Dumézil, the *gāndharva* mode. Cf. Brockington 2006, 36; Dumézil 1979, 37, who sees only one mode (the *brāhma*) in verse 8, and reaches eight by counting a northern interpolation (1.999*) that mentions the *ārṣa* mode, even though it is accounted for in 9ab.

53. *G* 4.6–15, *B* 1.20.16, and *M* 20–35 each mention eight. See Dumézil 1979, 35–39 on variations in other enumerations. As Heesterman 2001, 254 points out, most *gṛhyasūtras* mention only two types: bride-price (*śulka*) or unconditional bride-gift.

54. Jamison (1996, 305 n. 99), noting that "there seems to be no particular evidence for the *general* autonomy of Kṣatriya women," rightly questions Dumézil's view (1979, 43–44) that the "conflict between the woman's right to bestow herself in a Gāndharva marriage and the legal doctrine denying her 'independence'" is resolved by an extension to Kṣatriya women of "the 'autonomy' characteristic of Kṣatriyas." But the epics also give Kṣatriya women a *narrative autonomy* not found in the legal tradition as wider role models. Cf. Jamison 2001 on Ṛgvedic formulary evidence for the antiquity of the *svayaṃvara*.

55. *Mbh* 1.67.8–14; see Hopkins 1882, 256–57; Jamison 1996, 249–50.

three types of marriage most suitable for Kṣatriyas, elevating the Rākṣasa mode while suppressing the Gāndharva mode to make room for the *svayaṃvara*.[56] Among these three, the Gāndharva mode is similar to the *svayaṃvara* in that in both the woman participates in choosing: in the Gāndharva mode privately, in the *svayaṃvara* publicly.[57] And the *svayaṃvara* and the Rākṣasa modes share feats of valor that allow Bhīṣma to justify his intrusion as *dharma*.[58] Just to confirm, Vaiśaṃpāyana calls it *kṣatradharma* as Bhīṣma fights off the challenge of the last determined suitor (29).

Nonetheless, although this may all be Bhīṣma's derring-do, it is important not to miss that it has Satyavatī's "consent," both in the planning and the result.[59] Satyavatī, who would certainly know what it is to be well protected in marital arrangements, seems to have left these maidens to something close to the law of the fishes. It is hard to imagine what the three princesses would think while being carted off on a chariot under attack by thousands of kings: off on a wild adventure?[60] spellbound into inaction?[61] traumatized?[62] forced to calculate between wishing for the good or bad aim of their suitors in missing them? wishing someone would kill Bhīṣma? hoping that Bhīṣma's arrows protect them?[63] And what would they think, once he has defeated the last challenger, when he treats them "like daughters-in-law, younger sisters, or daughters" as they cross the lovely landscape on the way back to Hāstinapura (96.42–44)? They do not appear to learn this "Terrible" man's purpose until this "*dharma*-knower" has given (*pradadau*) them to his younger brother and

56. I think van Buitenen is right that "The present series misses the *Gāndharva* and possibly the *Prājāpatya* modes" (1973, 456), whereas Dumézil thinks it only "suppresses the *prājāpatya*" (1979, 38). *Ā* 2.5.11; 17–20 and *V* 1.28–35 omit the *prājāpatya* and *paiśāca*. On the *prājāpatya* as "the most difficult to distinguish of the four 'gift'-marriages," defined only by a mantra that joins the couple in practicing *dharma*, see Jamison 1996, 217–18, saying "probably *MBh* 1.96" omits it—but without clarifying. Somehow Jamison says Bhīṣma explains "the eight forms of marriage in wearisome detail" (299 n. 38).

57. See Dumézil 1979, 33 and n. 2 (on the *svayaṃvara*, "Je suis porté à y voir un dérivé 'policé' du mode *gāndharva*, propre à une société chevalresque"), 37–38, 54, 67–69, 82.

58. See Jamison 1996, 225 and Heesterman 2001, 256–57 on the *vīryaśulka svayaṃvara*: in Jamison's terms "a pseudo self-choice in which the maiden 'chooses' the man who accomplishes a feat of strength or manly skill set by her father." But it is unclear how this would apply to the Kāśi princesses, one of whom had preselected her suitor with her father's agreement.

59. See Satyavatī's joyful consent (*anumati*; *Mbh* 5.171.4) to the marriage once the three girls arrive, just before the eldest declines.

60. See Jamison (1996, 224) on the chariot ride to the groom's home in an ordinary marriage, "now ensconced on a tiny island of *his* property."

61. The eldest of the three, Ambā, later wishes she had jumped off and gone to her fiancé (5.173.4).

62. Regarding the "spectacular violence of the Rākṣasa marriage, *Manu* speaks of 'hitting,' 'cleaving,' and 'breaking' and of a 'screaming,' 'wailing' bride" (Heesterman 2001, 256, citing *M* 3.33; cf. Jamison 1996, 211, 218, 225).

63. In its violence to women, this "superhuman feat" *may* be comparable to his stopping the Gaṅgā.

begun preparations for their wedding "according to the Law of the good" (*satāṃ dharmeṇa dharmajñaḥ*), as he had decided with Satyavatī (96.45–46).

But now the eldest of these still unnamed maidens has a problem. While Bhīṣma is making wedding preparations, she reveals that she had prearranged with King Śālva of Saubha to choose (*vṛ*) him at the *svayaṃvara*, having already done so in her heart (*manasā*), as indeed Śālva had also formerly chosen her. Moreover, this was also the desire of her father (1.96.48–49). In other words, beneath this *svayaṃvara* there were some elements of a "love-match,"[64] the very thing Bhīṣma suppressed in his patchwork recital of the eight modes of marriage. Śālva was of course the last challenger, and the eldest abductee who had chosen him could well have wished for Bhīṣma's death—as she will soon do for the rest of her life, and indeed her next one. Her choices are thus important. On one level, we may be back in the divine plan, for as Biardeau remarks, rather than taking on the role of *dharmapatnī*, a wife in accord with *dharma*, that Bhīṣma offers her, she seems to have made the error of choosing for herself an Asura demon who had incarnated on earth.[65] And while that would not tell her story as she lives it, she is portrayed as defiant. Up to now she seems to be speaking only to Bhīṣma, but they are actually "in an assembly of Brahmins" (*viprasaṃsadi*; 96.50b). There she calls him "*dharma*-knower" and challenges him, now that he knows of her prior choice, to conduct himself in accord with *dharma* (*dharmam ācara*) (50)! Bhīṣma, who has subverted the *svayaṃvara* into a Rākṣasa-mode abduction and explained it as *dharma* by suppressing mention of a Gāndharva match that could be latent within it is suddenly challenged to rule on the two very things he had ruled out: a woman's choice and an apparent love match. Moreover, he is challenged to find a "courtroom" solution to a *dharma* predicament, as he will be again during Draupadī's humiliation at the dice match. But unlike his equivocation on Draupadī's question, this time "the *dharma*-knowing hero" and the Brahmins decide, with no reported discussion and without consulting Satyavatī, to give the oldest sister leave to go her own way. In these verses we learn that her name is Ambā, "Mother," and in the next verse that her two sisters, as they marry Vicitravīrya, are called Ambikā and Ambālikā (52), both diminutives for "Mother." The isolated "Mother" Ambā gets no

64. The father should be irrelevant to the *gāndharva* mode (*M* 3.32; see Dumézil 1979, 34, 43, 53). But see *Mbh* 13.44.5 where Bhīṣma says he rejects his own preference in that mode to give the bride to the man she loves (see Dumézil 1979, 39).

65. Biardeau 2002, 1: 221. Moreover, her father has agreed (Ibid.), which Biardeau suspects may reflect a connection of Kāśi and Vārāṇasī with Buddhism. Biardeau relies on a widely found northern variant here; but the CE at 1.61.17 has the demon Ajaka incarnate not in Śālva but in a king named Malla.

help from these two "little mothers" or her mother-in-law Satyavatī, who seems to have no voice in this assembly of Brahmins; and her "father's former desire" to see her married to Śālva is a matter that has no legal force. Although she will remain pertinent to this skein, this is the last one hears of her in it. Bhīṣma will bring her story up to date shortly before the war to explain why he will not fight a brother of Draupadī named Śikhaṇḍin, who is Ambā reborn after she had been rejected not only by Śālva but by Bhīṣma himself and has died vowing Bhīṣma's death in her next birth.

Neither Ambikā nor Ambālikā are ever ascribed a word. "Tall and dark (*bṛhatī śyāme*) and with blue-black curling hair, red-pointed nails, and buxom breasts and buttocks," they turn Vicitravīrya from being *dharma*-minded to desire-minded (*dharmātmā kāmātmā samapadyata*) for seven years until he dies from "consumption" (1.96.53–58). Once again Bhīṣma is "settled on the mind of Satyavatī" (59d), who is now not only a widow but a grieving childless mother:

> Then Satyavatī, distressed, wretched, eagerly longing for sons, having done the funeral rites for her son with her daughters-in-law, Bhārata, a thinking [or proud or eminent] woman (*māninī*), having reflected upon *dharma* and the Fathers' lineage and the Mothers' lineage (*dharmaṃ ca pitṛvaṃśaṃ ca mātṛvaṃśaṃ ca*), spoke to Gaṅgeya: "The ancestral offering (*piṇḍa*), fame, and continuity (*saṃtānam*) of the famous Kauravya Śaṃtanu who was always a man of *dharma* are established in you." (97.1–3)

When Satyavatī mentions the Mothers' lineage along with that of the Fathers, one might think she is referring to her own birth line (or lines . . .). But the ancestral *piṇḍa*—a rite where rice balls are offered up on behalf of both paternal and maternal grandparents in a son's patriline—tells us otherwise. She is thinking of all the men (notably her deceased husband and sons) and all the women (dead and especially living, including herself, Ambikā, and Ambālikā) married into the one dynastic line whose "continuity" she says she seeks now to secure through Bhīṣma. I would not rule out that she could also be thinking of her husband's first wife Gaṅgā, now back in heaven, but probably not as the recipient of a *piṇḍa*, since Gaṅgā is immortal. Both Gaṅgā and Satyavatī link the dynasty's "continuity" through Bhīṣma with *dharma*: the one through history (*itihāsa*), the other through lineage (*vaṃśa*, *kula*). With Satyavatī, we recall that the ancestral offering is one of the three debts and one of the five *mahāyajñas* that are done for the benefit of both male and female "fathers" as joint sacrificers.

Clearly, however, even if Satyavatī considers Bhīṣma the "best of the upholders of *dharma*" (7b), she can hardly expect that he will do what she

now asks of him, and we know what else she could have in the back of her mind even if she has apparently not thought of it yet:

> I shall enjoin (*viniyokṣyāmi*) you in a task. When you have heard it, you can do it. . . . Your brother's two chief queens (*mahiṣyau*), auspicious daughters of the Kāśi king, both lovely and in the bloom of youth, are desirous of sons, Bhārata. Beget children on them for the continuity of our line (*saṃtānāya kulasya naḥ*) by my appointment (*man-niyogāt*), fortunate one. You are able to do *dharma* here. Be consecrated as king of the realm and rule the Bhāratas. Take a wife by the Law (*dharmeṇa*). Do not drown (your) grandfathers. (97.7cd, 9–11)

Satyavatī mentions *dharma* at every turn (from 97.2–7 she refers to it seven times), but when it comes to being able to do *dharma* in two contradictory ways, Bhīṣma has established his preference for celibacy. No doubt Ghosh has a point that Satyavatī is taking a courageous risk, as she seems to leave a possibility that Bhīṣma could have a son who might succeed him as king with a new wife (2000, 41–42), although Satyavatī has certainly made her two widowed daughters-in-law his first "appointed" priority. But rather than "renouncing her self-interest irreversibly,"[66] I think Satyavatī is urgently throwing different options on the table more as a hastily calculated risk. Though jumbled, and whether or not she has her own next step in the back of her mind, she drives straight to the point that she knows Bhīṣma must reject. At first, she seems to be talking about *niyoga* as the appointment to a proxy siring, which perhaps by some wild stretch of the imagination she might think Bhīṣma would think of a way to do. But in short compass she asks him to do *dharma* by breaking both of his vows in order both to rule and to marry. Let us also note, and hold for further discussion, the incongruity of her mentioning two chief queens (*mahiṣīs*).

Bhīṣma reminds Satyavatī of both of his vows. Restating them, he says that even though her words are the highest *dharma*, nothing will make him forsake his truth even if "the Dharma King (Yama) should abandon *dharma*" (97.13–18). Satyavatī now admits, "I know the truth which you spoke for my sake," and she knows that Bhīṣma stands utterly upon it (20–21b); but she persists with one more appeal:

> Look to the Law of Distress. Carry out the ancestral yoke. Act, scourge of your foes, so the family thread (*kulatantu*) and *dharma* will not be lost and your wellwishers may rejoice. (97.21c–22)

66. Ghosh 2000, 42, tending to read disinterest into Satyavatī's decisions, I think gratuitously; cf. 2000, 42 on her agreement to seek a Brahmin to undertake a proxy siring.

According to the narrator Vaiśaṃpāyana, Satyavatī, still "wretched, eagerly longing for sons," is now reduced to "babbling and speaking astray from *dharma* (*dharmād apetam*)" (23). It seems that she is left to hold *dharma* and what she calls the bare "family thread" or "thread of the line" together all by herself. As she perceives, there seems to be no *dharma* solution outside the Law of Distress, for which Bhīṣma will reveal some uneasiness when he approaches that topic in the *Āpaddharmaparvan* of Book 12 (Bowles 2007, 192–94). But let us note that one imaginable solution goes unimagined: Satyavatī, now certainly no less a widowed queen than her daughters-in-law, would be available for a proxy siring herself. Like her two daughters-in-law, whom she will soon describe as "desirous of sons by the Law" (*putrakāme ca dharmataḥ*; 99.43), she too, as just mentioned, is "eagerly longing for *sons*" (*putragṛddhinī*). In these epics it would be no excuse to say she is too old (we have met one comparable figure: Bhīṣma's paternal grandmother, the wife of Devāpi; another is Kausalyā in the *Rāmāyaṇa*). As we shall see, this unmentionable (certainly Bhīṣma could not recommend it to his "mother") has some interest as a structural possibility. But back to reality, Bhīṣma does have an *āpaddharma* solution to offer that he can leave her and himself biologically out of, which he introduces as *kṣātra dharma*:

> I shall tell you, queen, the eternal Kṣatriya *dharma* by which even the continuity of Śaṃtanu (*śaṃtanor api saṃtānam*) may be imperishable (*akṣayam*) on earth. Having heard it, and having looked to the loom of the world (*lokatantram*), carry it out with wise household priests who are skilled in the aims of *āpaddharma* (97.25–26).

Once she listens, Satyavatī will not be left holding the last thread (*tantu*) of the line. For in his tightly packed response that "picks up" twice on the verbal root √*tan* in *tantu*, "thread," Bhīṣma offers her as *dharma* a way that she can work that thread back into the "continuity" (*saṃtāna*) of Śaṃtanu, having looked to the "loom" or "course" (*tantra*) of the world! It will be Satyavatī's—and our—task to unravel this teaser, which punctuates the end of an *adhyāya*. But first she must hear more from Bhīṣma, who has yet to know all that lies potent in his own words.

Without mentioning *niyoga* (or any derivative), which calls for the intervention of a (preferably older) brother of a deceased or otherwise incapacitated husband, Bhīṣma recommends—as a kind of alternative, or as Doniger puts it, as "pseudo-*niyoga*" (1995, 174)—that a Brahmin do the job, and provides two precedents. First, placing his proposal under the heading of Kṣatriya *dharma*, he invokes the story of Rāma Jāmadagnya: after he killed all the Kṣatriyas twenty-one times, their widows regenerated that population by uniting with

Brahmins (1.98.1–5).[67] Then he works back to that point rather obliquely by telling of the blind Ṛṣi Dīrghatamas, who was cursed in the womb to (as his name indicates) "long darkness" (6–19). When an apparently impotent king Bali engages him to sire sons with his wife, the Ṛṣi does this, but not before the queen rejects him for his blindness and age and refers him to her Śūdra nurse, with whom he first sires eleven of "his own" sons (20–33). As several (Doniger 1995, 174–75; Biardeau 2002, 1: 216 n. 21; Dhand 2004, 40, 42) have noted, there are foreshadowings here—blindness from a curse, rejected proxy, children with the servant—of what will soon be replicated in the Kuru line. But in brief, citing also a "Vedic" adage,[68] Bhīṣma thinks all that is necessary is to find a Brahmin "of stern spirit" (*niyātātmā*; 4c) and for the women in question to "keep in mind the Law" (*dharmam manasi saṃsthāpya*; 4–5). Satyavatī *herself* should thus invite a suitable Brahmin of qualities (*guṇavān*) to prosper the continuity (*saṃtāna*) of the lineage "in the fields of Vicitravīrya" (99.1–2).

So it is, with no hint that she has thought of it only suddenly, but rather because she knows Bhīṣma speaks the truth and because she trusts him, and for the continuity (*saṃtāna*) of the line, that Satyavatī now speaks of her premarital affair "with a faltering voice and as if smiling shyly" (1.99.3–4). She begins with how lawful everyone is and was: to Bhīṣma, "In our family you are *dharma*, you are the truth, you are the ultimate resort"; her father was legally engaged (*dharmayukta*) in his ferryboating; and "the supreme Ṛṣi Parāśara was the best of *dharma*'s upholders" (5–7). She tells how she was seduced by Parāśara's boons of smelling beautiful and restored virginity, how once born Vyāsa divided the Veda, etc. And she concludes that although she can bring Vyāsa there, they must co-invite him:

> He surely, when appointed (*niyuktaḥ*) by me and by you, . . . will beget beautiful offspring on your brother's fields. He has said, "You may remember me when a task need be done." I shall now recall him, strong-armed Bhīṣma, if you wish. Surely, Bhīṣma, with your consent (*anumate*) the great ascetic will beget sons in the fields of Vicitravīrya. (15–17)

Note that it is Satyavatī who introduces the terminology of *niyoga* in this irregular manner of appointing a Brahmin—but not without regularity, since Vyāsa (on the mother's side), like Bhīṣma (on the father's side), is an older (half-) brother of Vicitravīrya.

67. See chapter 7 § B.3 on Kṛṣṇa's version of this story, which is told from the different angle of regeneration in out-of-the-way places.

68. "'The son is his who took the hand,' so it is decided in the Vedas" (*pāṇigrāhasya tanaya iti vedeṣu niścitam*; 98.5ab). That is, the son belongs to the woman's husband, dead or alive.

Bhīṣma folds his hands in homage. Somehow knowing something of Vyāsa's reputation, he praises Vyāsa's insight into the three *puruṣārthas*, and approves. Here, for the first and only time in this skein, Satyavatī is given a provocative name:

> Then, when Bhīṣma had given his promise, O scion of the Kurus,
> Kālī directed her thought to the Muni Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana (21).

As far as I can see, Satyavatī's name Kālī has not been sufficiently considered.[69] Only Biardeau seems to have grappled with it, but she loses its singularity in her mythographic categories: Satyavatī's name, "la Noire," occurs in our present passage after Satyavatī mentions Vyāsa's name Kṛṣṇa, "black" (2002, 1: 216); and when Vaiśaṃpāyana mentions it, he "goes so far as to call [her] Kālī, 'la Noire,' from the name of the goddess under the cruel form of slayer of the Buffalo *asura*" (220). Biardeau offers no explanation of what Satyavatī has to do with slaying the Buffalo Demon, and would seem to overparticularize[70] where Kālī is something more general: the name of a goddess recognized for being above all, like Śaṃtanu's other wife Gaṅgā, a very famous Mother.

This is not an easy point to make, since, as has been recognized for some time (see Kinsley 1975, 89), there seems to be only one place in the *Mahābhārata*, at least in the Critical Edition, which could be used to support the idea that the epic poets even know this "dread goddess."[71] But it is not a negligible usage, and despite what I said some years ago, it is not likely to be an "intrusion."[72] "*Kālī*" is used either as an adjective or a proper name to introduce the goddess Kālarātrī, the "Night of Time," also calling her a Kṛtyā, an apparitional goddess of black magic.[73] It describes Kālarātrī as she is seen by the warriors about to be slaughtered by Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman as he is possessed by Śiva during the night massacre that brings the *Mahābhārata* war to its final cataclysm, and as she was seen by those warriors in dreams all during the war (10.8.64–67). As Jacques Scheuer cleverly puts it, Kālarātrī "is presented with the features of a black woman (*kālī*, the first word of the description, is nearly a proper name) . . . " (1982, 316). And indeed, Biardeau takes it as a proper

69. Translating it as "the Dark Woman" (1973, 234), van Buitenen compares it to her supposed name Kṛṣṇā, "the black one," as reflecting her "low origins" from an "aboriginal fishing tribe" (447). But he cites no instance of Satyavatī's being called Kṛṣṇā, and there is none in Sörensen's *Index* of *Mbh* names ([1904] 1963).

70. Biardeau links epic usages of "Kālī" with the killing of the Buffalo Demon as part of an argument that it appears in two hymns to Durgā in Books 4 and 6 (2002, 2: 467) that are rejected by the CE as interpolated.

71. *Manu* already knows of Kālī as Bhadrakālī in connection with the householder's Bali offerings (*M* 3.89).

72. Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 326. See now Johnson 1998, 115–16 for a better assessment.

73. On Kṛtyā as parallel to Draupadī and later associated with Kālī, see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 190–92; Türstig 1985.

name.[74] In either case, I think it is plausible to think of it as a reference to Kālī (cf. Johnson 1998, 115). But even if this Kṛtyā Kālarātrī is just another "dark woman," we still have the case of Satyavatī, which could stand alone in the epic as a reference to Kālī. What then can we learn from the uses of this name for her?

First of all, as regards this one reference to Satyavatī as Kālī in this skein, I believe Biardeau has the right impulse to note that it occurs after Satyavatī mentions Vyāsa's name Kṛṣṇa. Biardeau also links Satyavatī–Kālī with the "epic constant" of darkness: as with the dark Yamunā from which she is born, both she and her son are among the dark "personages connected with saving the *dharma* of the world of transmigration" (2002, 1: 201). Contextually, however, when Vaiśaṃpāyana invokes this name, he reminds us, just as Satyavatī recalls Vyāsa's birth, indeed, as she brings him back into her world by remembering him, that she was "Kālī" when he was born. This is also what the higher order narrator, Ugraśravas, has said earlier when he introduced Vyāsa upon his arrival at Janamejaya's Snake Sacrifice to hear his epic composition recited for the first time. Vyāsa is:

> he whom Kālī had birthed from Parāśara, son of Śakti, even as a
> virgin on a Yamunā island, the grandfather of the Pāṇḍavas who, the
> same day he was born from his mother, matured his body by will.
> (1.54.2–3b)

The case is also similar in the prose genealogy of the whole dynasty that Vaiśaṃpāyana delivers just before he spins out our present skein from it. When he comes to Satyavatī she is called Gandhakālī (90.51), "Kālī of the Smell"; and although the two names are used together to describe everything she does, Gandhakālī is used more tightly with reference to her mothering and premarital birthing of Vyāsa:

> Bhīṣma, to do his father a favor, brought him Satyavatī, the mother
> whom they called Gandhakālī, whose premarital son (*kānīna*)
> Dvaipāyana was a child from Pārāśara. . . . (1.90.51–52; cf. *M* 9.160, 172)

Whereas "Kālī of the Smell" would presumably have the smell of dead fish, which Satyavatī loses while keeping her virginity thanks to Parāśara's boons, she is not called Gandhavatī[75] or Yojanagandhā (1.57.67) until she has started

74. Biardeau 2002, 2: 464–65: "Kālī, au visage et aux yeux rouges, . . . C'est Kālarātri. . . ." Recall n 38: Biardeau 2002, 1: 219 explains Satyavatī's name as "she who has within her all beings." This is really an etymology of her name as based on *sat*, "being," which could give us the name Satī, Śiva's first wife, whom the purāṇic Kālī becomes after she sheds her darkness (Hiltebeitel 1999c).

75. Vyāsa is frequently called the son of Gandhavatī, "the Fragrant," which could, of course, recall either's smell.

to smell like perfume. I think the poets describe Satyavatī as having undergone a transformation similar to ones undergone by other goddesses, but especially by Kālī, from dark to beautiful, usually golden or light (*gaurī*), to make her marriageable to Śiva.[76]

Although it is not the case in our present skein, Satyavatī also carries her name Kālī into her marriage to Śaṃtanu. There are some striking instances when Bhīṣma tells Duryodhana the story of Ambā (in the *Ambopākhyāna*) to explain why he will not fight Śikhaṇḍin, and again, it is usually a question of her being a mother.[77] For instance, Bhīṣma says that when Śaṃtanu was worried that having one son was like having none, "Knowing his desire I brought him the mother Kālī (*kālīṃ mātaram āvaham*)" (5.145.18cd). But most fascinating are Bhīṣma's usages when he describes the dire condition of the heirless realm after the death of Vicitravīrya:

> When Indra no longer rained on the kingless kingdom, the subjects hastened to me, oppressed by hunger and fear. "All the subjects are dwindling! Be our king and revive us! Be blessed, drive away the plagues (*ītayo nuda*). All your subjects are oppressed by the most terrible diseases (*vyādhibhir*) and but few remain, Gāṅgeya. You can rescue us! Dispel the diseases, hero, protect the subjects by *dharma* lest the kingdom fall to ruin while you are alive." The subjects wailed, yet my mind was not shaken. Remembering the conduct of the good, I kept to my oath, great king. The cityfolk and my auspicious mother Kālī (*mātākālī ca me śubhā*), the retainers, the house priests and preceptors, and the learned Brahmins, much scorched, told me, "Be the king!" continuously. . . . At their words, son, I folded my hands, greatly distressed and unhappy, and told them again and again the oath I had made out of deference to my father, that for the sake of the lineage I would keep my seed drawn up and not be king. Then, having folded my hands, I placated my mother again and again, O king: "Mother (*amba*), though I am born from Śaṃtanu and carry the lineage of Kuru, I cannot belie my oath, withal for your own sake. Do not appoint (*mā . . . niyojaya*) the yoke to me. I am your servant and slave, O mother (*amba*) who loves her children!" (5.145.24–29, 31–33)

It is fascinating to see Bhīṣma telling Duryodhana that he called Satyavatī *ambā* while telling him the story of Ambā—as if all pestilential mothers were one, at

76. The theme occurs in the *Devī Māhātmyā* and widely in the *Purāṇas*.

77. Only once do I find the name not referencing Satyavatī as "mother," when Bhīṣma tells Duryodhana that he informed "Kālī Satyavatī" and various courtiers that he had given Ambā leave to go to Śālva (5.172.1–2).

least to him.[78] The conditions that induce Bhīṣma and Satyavatī to call in Vyāsa, which as Bhīṣma says was the next thing they did (5.145.34–35), are thus ones that one could associate with Kālī as a mother of ills and destruction—though again, this is not to say Satyavatī is that goddess, only that she is being called Kālī in a way that seems to recall such a goddess. The name deepens Satyavatī's primordiality to put it on a par with Gaṅgā's, with each equally intertwined into the Kuru dynasty's lineage problems and solutions. As Bhīṣma tells it, the public thinks the restoration of *dharma* is up to him, but he knows that it must also be up to her. In our skein, these dire conditions will soon be described much more minimally by Satyavatī to Vyāsa.

But first, even while Vyāsa was propounding the Vedas, he appeared "instantly, having discerned his mother's thought" (1.99.22), and without her having said a word. As she embraces him with tears, she is once again the fisherwoman (*dāśeyī*), and he sprinkles his "distressed mother" with water, greeting her too before saying, "I have come to do what you intend. Command me, you who know the true nature (*tattva*) of *dharma*, and I will do what pleases you" (25). If there was any doubt when she veered from *dharma* or deferred to Bhīṣma about it, here we have the word of the author that she knows its true nature. Vyāsa even seems eager to act on her command, as if he equates the Law with whatever pleases his mother. Satyavatī begins with an assertion of the parity of father and mother in parenting sons: "Sons are born the common property of the mother and father, O poet (*kavi*). As the father is their owner (*svāmī*), so is the mother, no doubt" (28). Drawing together the brotherhoods of Vyāsa and Vicitravīrya on the mother's side and Bhīṣma on the father's, and mentioning Bhīṣma's disinclination to rule or have children, she now proposes this:

> Out of esteem for your brother, for the continuity (*saṃtāna*) of the line, at Bhīṣma's word and by my own appointment (*niyogāt*), blameless one, out of compassion (*anukrośāt*) for beings and for the protection of everyone, with non-cruelty (*ānṛśaṃsyena*) you must do what I am proposing. (32–33)

Note, again, that it is she who must make the appointment. Vyāsa is to beget sons on the two lovely wives of Vicitravīrya, who are "desirous of sons in accordance with *dharma*" (34). Vyāsa's response is to confirm Satyavatī's profundity when it comes to *dharma*:

78. On "*ambā*" and a suggestive discussion of Ambā as a third "mother" of Bhīṣma along with Gaṅgā and Satyavatī, see Fitzgerald 2007, 191. Along with the other mother-triads that occur in successive generations, this set gives Bhīṣma different mothers across at least two generations.

> You know *dharma*, Satyavatī, both the higher and the lower (*paraṃ cāparam eva ca*). And since, knower of *dharma*, your mind is set on *dharma*, therefore by your appointment (*niyogāt*), having pointed out what is needed with respect to *dharma*, I will do what you desire as it is found to be ancient practice. (36–37)

Indeed, Vyāsa says that Satyavatī speaks both for the higher and lower *dharma*, which, in the words of the passage that introduces him at Janamejaya's Snake Sacrifice, he can certainly do: "He was a Brahmarṣi who knew the high and the low (*parāvarajñaḥ*), a poet, a man of true vows, and pure" (1.54.5cd).

But exactly what would the high and low be in the current situation? Vyāsa may be preparing Satyavatī for a little problem he has just mentioned: that he will now indicate what is needed with respect to *dharma* before he can undertake "her appointment." Vyāsa says he will give his brother sons the likes of Mitra and Varuṇa, but that the two widows must submit to a year-long vow before he lies with them (1.99.38–39). That may be the higher law, and, if so, Satyavatī is urgent for a lower one: "In kingless kingdoms there is no rain, no gods. How, lord, can a kingdom be preserved that has no king!" (99.40c–41b). In that case, says Vyāsa, to bear a superior child the minimal vow will be that the widows must bear his ugliness: "my smell (*gandha*), my looks, my garb, and my body" (43ab).

Meeting Ambikā in secret, Satyavatī begins, "Kausalyā, what I say to you is the loom of the law (*dharmatantram*). Listen to me" (99.45ab). Going on to say that the appointment is in accord with Bhīṣma's view (*buddhi*) and yet still up to her own view (*buddhi*), "somehow (*kathaṃcid*) she persuaded that *dharma*-farer [Ambikā] by appealing to *dharma*" (1.99.46–47, 49). As the "somehow" suggests, those who are "appointed" are not always so accepting of this "ancient practice." Whatever pestilential conditions may have already beset this kingless kingdom, Satyavatī's urgency looks like it is the first thing to deprive the Kurus of kings the likes of the Vedic sovereigns Mitra and Varuṇa. And the second is that even though Vyāsa has just said that without the year's vow it will depend on the deportment of the widows whether they get superior sons, Satyavatī does not sufficiently warn at least the first of them, Ambikā, and actually seems to mislead her, telling her to expect a "brother-in-law" (*devara*), which makes Ambikā think she will be lying with "Bhīṣma or another of the Kuru bulls" (100.2–3; see Biardeau 2002, 1: 217; Dhand 2004, 35). The result is that when Ambikā shuts her eyes at Vyāsa's ugliness, Vyāsa curses her son to be born blind "because of his mother's defect of virtue" (*matuḥ . . . vaiguṇyād*; 10c).[79]

79. Cf. 96.45: all three maids were *guṇasampannā* when abducted. Even though Ambikā is a *dharmacāriṇī* (99.49; cf. Gāndhārī at 103.11), she is *vaiguṇya*—suggesting a disjunction between her *dharma* and her *guṇas*.

Satyavatī quickly recognizes that no blind man can be king of the Kurus and seems to correct what may have been an oversight in her first appointment. This time she asks Vyāsa to "grant a protector of the lineage of affines (*jñāti*) and an increaser of the lineage of Fathers—a second king of the Kuru lineage" (12). Note her three differentiable usages of "lineage" (*vaṃśa*) in this one verse. The lineage of affines would include Satyavatī and Vyāsa, who would belong to the Kuru *vaṃśa* on her side as her son, but now also as a father. Vyāsa meets Satyavatī's new request, but minimally: because Ambālikā pales, he curses her son Pāṇḍu to be born pale (14–21).

Finally, Satyavatī gives the first widow a second chance, but when Ambikā recalls Vyāsa's smell (*gandha*) and appearance (obviously, smell stands out in her recollections) and dresses a beautiful Śūdra servant to replace her in bed, Vyāsa and the Śūdra woman produce the "half-breed" (*karaṇa*) Vidura, an incarnation of the god Dharma and skilled in both *dharma* and *artha* (100.22–28, 101.27–28).[80] Whereas the Law of Mother Gaṅgā shortchanged the Kuru dynasty, giving it kings well-versed in *dharma* but only for one generation, the Law of Mother Kālī continues to beset it with too many flawed successors: two dead, and three now each with a defect as to being king, with only Pāṇḍu's blemish leaving him eligible.

Yet if Satyavatī seems to leave nothing but loose ends, she also ties together the continuity theme with a curious term: what she speaks, she says, is "the loom of the Law" (*dharmatantram*). Van Buitenen translates *dharmatantram* as "under the Law" (1973, 235); Ganguli as "It is consistent with virtue" ([1884–96] 1970, 1: 246). Both are apt but neither captures the verbal play that makes this usage nodal and justifies such a literal translation once again. As mentioned, Satyavatī seemed to be left holding the bare "family thread" or "thread of the line" (*kulatantu*) alone (97.22) until Bhīṣma offered his recommendation that she look to the "loom" or "course of the world" (*lokatantram*) and consult with household priests conversant with *āpaddharma* (26). With the concurrence of Vyāsa, who will serve the Pāṇḍavas as a priest in their great rituals, though not as their *purohita* (see Sullivan 1990*a*, 31–34),

80. See *M* 9.57–70, 167. Vyāsa would seem to be in violation of *Manu*'s stipulation that the man should never approach the same widow twice (60), but then he sleeps not with the widow but her Śūdra maidservant. Indeed, at *M* 9.167, *niyoga* can be a woman's *svadharma*! Although the *Mahābhārata* may imply this when it takes recourse to *dharma* as its justification for *niyoga*, it seems to spare its women characters—and particularly Kuntī—the argument that it is their *svadharma*. On Vidura as a *karaṇa*, see MW 254: a son of mixed class variously defined; a writer, scribe! In later terms, a Karṇam. One might say that in contrast to Yudhiṣṭhira, about whom one keeps hearing that it is his very nature or *svabhāva* to *be* or embody *dharma* (see chapters 9 § D.2.b and 10 § C, and *Mbh* 6.115.63–65 cited in chapter 1 § C), Vidura is a kind of moral accountant—a contrast I owe to a conversation with Gurcharan Das (October 2010). Das writes of this difference as follows: whereas Yudhiṣṭhira offers "a view of the world, based on dharma, which he explains as a universal duty of righteousness," Vidura's "moral thinking is based on the consequences of actions rather than duty" (2009, 15–16).

she now urges as *dharmatantra* the first of the three unions that will produce what Bhīṣma will soon enough, after a time of onrolling *dharma* under his regency,[81] confirm are the needed threads to continue the lineage into the next generation. As he says to Vyāsa's three sons, and Vidura in particular, when he begins to plot their weddings:

> Our family, protected by the great-spirited *dharma*-knowing kings of old, has never come to ruin here; and through me, Satyavatī, and the great-spirited Kṛṣṇa [Vyāsa], it has been firmly established in yourselves, the threads of the line (*yusmāsu kulatantuṣu*). (103.2–3)

Indeed, well before this in the text (or after it in the sequence of frames), the higher order narrator Ugraśravas prepared his audience, the Ṛṣis of the Naimiṣa Forest, to anticipate such "extended" verbal play, saying of Vyāsa when he comes to Janamejaya's Snake Sacrifice:

> It was he who with holy renown and great fame begot Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu, and Vidura, extending (or stringing along) the continuation (or stretching over) of Śaṃtanu (*śaṃtanoḥ saṃtatiṃ tanvan*). (1.54.6)

We see then how Mother Kālī Satyavatī has reset the shuttles of the divine plan along with Bhīṣma and Vyāsa. But let us not forget that Śaṃtanu himself and above all his first wife, Gaṅgā, set the first threads to this tapestry. Indeed, still within the higher order narration of the Bard Ugraśravas, I believe we are taken back to one of the riddles that provide an allegorical backcloth to the entire *Mahābhārata* in the story of Uttaṅka (see n. 14). These two Mothers—the bright woman of the night and the dark woman brought ashore by day—give genealogical shape to the Uttaṅka story's unique identification of Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ, the Placer and Ordainer, respectively, as goddesses, weavers on the loom (*tantre*) of Time whose black and white threads (*tantavaḥ*) are woven into nights and days (1.3.167, 172), just as the children and descendants of these two mothers are threads woven into the nights and days of this text.

E. The Transitional "Three Mothers"

As we move from the generation of Satyavatī's sons to that of her grandsons, Bhīṣma once again brings in three women to be queens of the royal line:

81. Most of *adhyāya* 1.102 describes a time of plenty in which these four are said to have rolled along (*avartata*): the Kṛtayuga or Golden Age (5d), the supreme Law (*dharmam uttamam*; 7d), the Wheel of Dharma (*dharmacakra*; 12f) held by Bhīṣma, and a saying that went around in all kingdoms that said, "Of mothers of heroes (*vīrasūnām*) the daughters of Kāśi, of countries Kurujāṅgala, of *dharma*-knowing princes Bhīṣma, and of cities the Town of the Elephant" (21–22).

Gāndhārī, to marry Dhṛtarāṣṭra; and Kuntī and Mādrī to marry Pāṇḍu (103–5). He also secures an unnamed bastard daughter of a king[82] to be Vidura's wife, with whom Vidura has many virtuous sons who are unnamed like their mother (106.12–14). Presumably Bhīṣma follows custom in finding brides for brothers in their order of seniority. We must soon bring closure on this headline role of Bhīṣma, by which Dumézil dubs him "Bhīṣma marieur," Bhīṣma the matchmaker (1979, 66–71). Dumézil covers Bhīṣma's part in arranging the marriages of Satyavatī to his father Śaṃtanu; of two of the three sisters he abducted for his half-brother Vicitravīrya; and now of these three wives for Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu (66–67). Indeed, not only can we add to this his arrangement of Vidura's marriage, we could also suspect that his matchmaking role was set for him in his previous life as Dyaus when he was the chief among the eight Vasus to get the *samaya* (91.21–22) or boon (*varam*, 93.40–42) of Gaṅgā by which she married Mahābhiṣa-Śaṃtanu and became Bhīṣma's own mother.

In any case, the first thing we may note about "Bhīṣma marieur" is that, once he has accomplished these three generations of matchmaking, he seems to have finished all work of this kind. When it comes to the marriage of Draupadī, such family business has been handed over to his logical counterpart and co-"grandfather" Vyāsa, who, from Draupadī's wedding on to the revival of the Pāṇḍavas' grandson Parikṣit, gets help from Kṛṣṇa in carrying forward the ongoing wonders of the line's continuity. From such hindsight, Bhīṣma's matchmaking seems to have been doomed to repeat certain types of failures through the two transitions under his watch—failures that he was hardly the one to correct.

In the first transition, Bhīṣma seems bent on repeating a fateful fascination with primal Mothers, with the first of whom, Gaṅgā, he in effect—as Dyaus—arranged his own conception. If I have invoked the primordial renown of Gaṅgā and Kālī Satyavatī as Mothers, I passed too quickly over an evident continuity with the names of their three successors: the three Kāśi princesses Bhīṣma abducts to marry Vicitravīrya. Bhīṣma's and Satyavatī's intention is to bring these three "Mothers" into the lineage before they ever are such, in this case mothers less by reputation than by their names, which mean something like Mama (Ambā), Mamita (Ambikā), and Mamacita (Ambālikā), or, if one prefers, "Mummy, Mummikins, little Mummy" (Jamison 1996, 67, 69, 79). They are brought in to be mothers like Gaṅgā and Satyavatī, but unlike them they are brought in violently; and their manner of becoming mothers will not be to their liking. Moreover, as both Jamison

82. See van Buitenen 1973, 243, with "bastard" for *pāraśavī*: in *Gautama*'s possibly earliest account of mixed classes (Olivelle 1999, xxxi), a child born to a woman three classes below the man (*G* 4.17). This would describe Vidura, but be problematic for a king's daughter if there is "no fifth" class, unless the king were a Brahmin.

and Biardeau have recognized (without, it seems, anyone else having waded in on it), these three names in combination cannot be disentangled from their use in a celebrated—if often called "notorious"—scene in the great royal horse sacrifice, the Aśvamedha. This usage occurs when the three names are invoked in a formula special to the Aśvamedha while the chief queen or *mahiṣī* is having undercover ritual intercourse with the sacrificed horse. The formula has what Jamison calls "clean and dirty versions" (79). The first and most widely mentioned in the texts is used when the *mahiṣī* is led up to the slain horse accompanied by her cowives (each of whom may have a hundred attendants). Here the mantra is:

> O Ambā, Ambālī, Ambikā [var. Ambā, Ambikā, Ambālikā][83]
> No one is leading (*nayati*) me.
> The horsikins is sleeping. (Jamison 1996, 67, trans. *TS* 7.4.19.1ab)

"Leading," according to Jamison (67, 274 n. 108), probably introduces a conventional sense of √*nī* to suggest that the *mahiṣī* is being led, as it were, into matrimony. Then, once the *mahiṣī* has settled herself with the horse beneath a blanket[84] and either the Adhvaryu priest or the king (her husband as Sacrificer) has uttered the most straightforwardly erotic of all the rite's mantras, focusing on her sexual pleasure, the *mahiṣī*, having "manipulate[d] the dead horse into some sort of copulatory position," in some texts modifies her mantra to say:

> O Ambā, Ambālī, Ambikā[85]
> No one is fucking (*yabhati*) me.
> The horsikins is sleeping. (Jamison 1996, 69, trans. *TS* 7.4.19.2h)

With or without these words, which "mock" or "scold" the horse, the rite clearly invites the dead horse to regain its sexual stamina,[86] for one of the Aśvamedha's purposes is to induce fertility, and specifically to obtain royal offspring (66, 76; cf. 242). Meanwhile, the cowives and their attendants circulate back and forth

83. The usual opening line *ambe ambāly ambike* has, as Jamison observes (1996, 274 n. 107; 304 n. 87), a precise *Mahābhārata* nomenclature and sequence in *VS* 23.18: *ámbe ámbike 'mbālike*, with the same but for the initial vocative in *MS* 3.12.20. According to Jamison (243), "the three vocatives are taken as variants on affectionate terms for "mother," but together they also add up to the "three Ambikās" of Rudra Tryambaka and its *vṛddhi* derivative, the Traiyambakahoma."

84. Biardeau says, "It seems that the queen complains at being looked at in the sexual act" (2002, 1: 220). See Jamison 1996, 67: before the Adhvaryu covers the *mahiṣī* and the horse with a linen blanket, she "lies down beside the horse and invites it to stretch out its forefeet along with hers." How that would help achieve a position for sexual contact is not made clear.

85. *VS* and *MS* apparently do not have a "crude version" with the precise *Mahābhārata* names.

86. See chapters 7 § A.1 and 12 § A on the *Yuga Purāṇa*'s allusion to the closing episode of the *Harivaṃśa* where Indra animates the horse to have intercourse with King Janamejaya's wife.

around the horse and the *mahiṣī* slapping their thighs and fanning with their hems, and then exchange “slangy and crude” riddling mantras with the priests (65–66, 69–70).

The use of this formula to overcome childlessness gives us, then, an obvious point in common with what Bhīṣma and Satyavatī initially wish from the three Kāśi sisters, and continue to wish from the two younger of them even after they have become widows. But as Jamison and Biardeau recognize, the connection is anything but obvious, in no small part because there is no Aśvamedha at this point in the *Mahābhārata* (indeed, with Bhīṣma as regent, there is no king to perform one). Jamison, looking back to Vedic sources, proposes that the two usages can be illumined by a third: a “husband-finding” (*pati-vedana*) ceremony in its form as an “addendum” to the third of the Four-monthly (Caturmāsyāni) seasonal rites called the Sākamedha, in which Rudra is worshiped with a Traiyambaka Homa that includes Aśvamedha features: especially (along with more back and forth thigh-slapping[87]) the names of the “three mothers” formula condensed into “Traiyambaka” as a name for Rudra, who is worshiped both to remove the young woman’s lack of marital success and to secure her first unborn descendant (242–43, 245–46). Biardeau, on the other hand, looks toward Purāṇic usages and finds the “link . . . between the rite and its epic role” (if I am unpacking her brief discussion correctly) in the proposition that the triple name in the Aśvamedha would evoke one person, the *mahiṣī*, “transformed into three women” as the Kāśi sisters, and that the one woman chiefly in question would thus be Ambikā—whom she calls here “the mother of Pāṇḍu,” but must mean the mother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra—not only as the *mahiṣī*, but in anticipation of her name becoming “one of the most frequent names of the Goddess” (2002, 1: 220).

I believe that both these authors have found pieces to a puzzle that the *Mahābhārata* poets have intentionally left incomplete. And if that is so, then so it must remain. But I think there are more pieces to be found if we allow for two things: first, that the *Mahābhārata* episode alludes knowingly to this Aśvamedha mantra and its ritual scene without being willing to make it obvious. For I think what it wants to do is pull off an innuendo that beneath the already potentially disagreeable submission to proxy siring (*niyoga*) to which the two widows are asked to submit, there is the further suggestion that the smelly and misshapen author Vyāsa is cryptically taking on the role of the revived sacrificial horse. Second, I would urge that if we dig into the contextual site of this

87. Jamison 1996, 242–44 (it uses a mantra to Tryambaka found in *ṚV* 7.59.12 that the girl modifies to request a husband). As she points out, both rites resemble the movements of fire-circling servant maids on the Mahāvrata day of the Gavāmayana.

episode while thinking more or less synchronically across the two Sanskrit epics rather than reaching back to supposedly older versions of the epic story, which I consider unlikely,[88] or resting the case on anticipatory epic outcroppings of postepic goddess mythology, we can see a few more pieces of the puzzle crop up from the text itself.

The first move, then, is to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where a parallel scheme contextualizes this interpretation. It is a case of the *Rāmāyaṇa* having two Aśvamedhas where the *Mahābhārata* seems—until one sees the double parallel—to have only one. For whereas the *Mahābhārata* slots this present story of the rescue of the Kuru line amid (and, I argue, colored by) the other rescues of the line that come before and after it in the same skein, and has an actual Aśvamedha in its main narrative only later as a sin-cleansing rite after the *Mahābhārata* war (14.70.15–16; Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 292), the *Rāmāyaṇa* has two Aśvamedhas in its main narrative: the first slotted at the only parallel point where it is a question of rescuing the Ikṣvāku line by the birth of Daśaratha's four sons headed by Rāma,[89] and the second, as in the *Mahābhārata*, a postwar sin-cleansing[90] rite of realm consolidation. Something of this complexity calls for a fuller exposition elsewhere.[91] But let us not miss the ways that both epics keep the Aśvamedha's reputation for replenishing the continuity of royal lineages even in their second Aśvamedhas. In the *Mahābhārata*, it is during the postwar Aśvamedha that Kṛṣṇa revives the stillborn Parikṣit, as Vyāsa had promised. And in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is during the postwar Aśvamedha that Rāma discovers his sons Kuśa and Lava, born to Sītā during her banishment in Vālmīki's hermitage, who will now be Rāma's recovered heirs.[92]

88. Jamison 1996, 304 n.94 "assumes that some version of the epic story of Ambā and her sisters already existed in early Vedic and that these girls were associated with the three Ambikās belonging to Rudra. Despite the difficulties . . ., I think this is more likely than assuming that a later epic poet simply made up the story of the abduction and its aftermath and named the female protagonists by plucking some designations out of the onomastic repository of Vedic ritual." I see the alternative more positively as part of the *Mbh*'s project of *knowing* Vedic allusion (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 42 and *passim*).

89. This rite (*Rām* 1.8–17) is undertaken by the potent Ṛṣi Ṛyaśṛṅga for the "continuity" (*saṃtāna*; 10.5; 11.2) of the aged and sonless Daśaratha's line, and is doubled by a *putrīyā iṣṭi* (or *putrakāmeṣṭi*) or "son-producing sacrifice" (14.2–3; 15.24) that yields the porridge that the three queens then share to get pregnant with portions of Viṣṇu. Cf. Goldman 1984, 60, 74–77.

90. Rāma proposes a Rājasūya sacrifice, but Bharata tells him a horse sacrifice is less destructive and that the Aśvamedha removes all sins and purifies (*Rām* 7.75.2). Lakṣmaṇa tells of Indra's Aśvamedha to recover from the Brahmanicide of killing Vṛtra, which could allude to Rāma's Brahmanicide in killing Rāvaṇa, a descendent of the Brahmin sage Pulastya.

91. See Hiltebeitel 2007*a*, 126–35 on the *Mahābhārata*'s postwar Aśvamedha; 2011*a*, chapter 9, on this episode along side prewar and postwar Aśvamedhas in both epics.

92. Note that Sītā, the would-be *mahiṣī* of this piece, is brought to the Aśvamedha not to lie with the horse but to make the disagreeable attestation to her purity that results in her earthen engulfment, but also confirms the legitimacy of her two sons.

What then are the additional puzzle pieces that crop up from the site of Vyāsa's "appointment" to sire sons on the two Kāśi widows? The first two are his insistence that what is needed with respect to *dharma* is that the two widows undergo a year-long vow before he lies with them, and that should they do this he will give his deceased brother sons the likes of Mitra and Varuṇa (1.99.38–39). However general it may appear, the stipulation of a year-long vow is an exact counterpart to the Aśvamedha requirement that the king and his queens must remain sexually abstinent during the full year that the horse wanders free.[93] Moreover, Vyāsa's precision regarding the pair Mitra and Varuṇa is unusual in the epic and certainly has a Vedic ring.[94] It is important to remember who is speaking here and what he has been doing. The last we heard of Vyāsa before Satyavatī recalled him as needed was that he had gone off to the Himalayas to divide the Vedas and impart the *Mahābhārata* as the fifth Veda to his five disciples, who were to proclaim it as the *Bhārata* (1.57.73–75). These precisions about a year-long vow, night-visitation, and Vedic-issue sons thus come from a Veda-knowing author who could be alluding to what we learned in chapter 3 § D: that the Aśvamedha variously identifies the king with *dharma*, and that the Rājasūya, the other great Vedic royal ritual, invokes Mitra as "lord of truth" and Varuṇa as "lord of *dharma*" in announcing the newly consecrated Bhārata king (*MS* 2.6.6; *TS* 1.8.10.1–2). Such a momentary fusion of elements from of two great royal rituals would fit our scene, since Vyāsa would be engendering just such a king—or two. It is also in this domain of Vedic allusion that I would propose some explanation of how and why Vyāsa would be encrypting himself as a revived sacrificial horse.

First of all, the *Mahābhārata* is certainly in step with the *dharmasūtra–dharmaśāstra* literature and the Mīmāṃsā in considering Veda as a source of *dharma*. But more than these surrounding literatures, and also more pervasively than the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is disposed to give new and often enigmatic shape to Vedic usages and practices in its main and ancillary narratives. What we are finding in our current skein is that this can be particularly the case where the Vedic practices themselves—as with this kingless Aśvamedha scene, and also with *niyoga*—are already enigmatic and of dark and doubtful *dharma* from the standpoint of post-Vedic Brahmanical culture. Their cachet lies in their being

93. See Jamison 1996, 84: "During the year when the horse is journeying, the king lies nightly with his favorite wife (Vāvātā), but does not have sex." In *ŚB* 13.4.1.9, he thinks, "May I, by this austerity (*anena tapasā*), reach the end of the year successfully." Similarly, the horse on its travels is to be kept away from mares, and if it should mate, an expiation is required.

94. Elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata*, I can find the two gods occurring alone together only with reference to Agastya as their son (12.329.38; 13.151.3), and at 14.59.14.

reminders and remainders of *dharma* changing over time. It is thus telling that it would be Vedavyāsa who confirms these practices as *dharma*. Secondly, Vyāsa makes a singular appearance in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, which, I have argued (Hiltebeitel 2006*a*, 249–50), offers a *bhakti* decryption of a number of the epic's Vedic and purāṇic allusions. As mentoned in chapter 6, the *Nārāyaṇīya* comes to its deepest level of disclosure when Vyāsa tells Janamejaya, who has just been instructed to perform a Horse Sacrifice on top of his Snake Sacrifice (12.334.8–9), about the manifestation of Nārāyaṇa as the Horse's Head (Hayaśiras) while it is further disclosed that Vyāsa is a "portion" of Nārāyaṇa as well.[95] These *Nārāyaṇīya* enigmas give a glimpse of Vyāsa's horseplay that might not be limited to speaking from the horse's mouth. The interpretation is in any case proposed as similar to the one Jamison offers in interpreting *Ṛgveda* 10.86 about Indra's monkey-companion Vṛṣākapi "as a veiled Horse Sacrifice" that describes, among the benefits brought by "Indraṇī's mating with Vṛṣākapi," the restoration of Indra's worship with bulls and soma, the reaffirmation of his power, his recovery of good erections, and his attainment of sons (1996, 74–88 quoting 81, 82–83).

Now Vyāsa only says he will sire sons the likes of Mitra and Varuṇa (*Mbh* 1.99.38b), not kings. But we know that is what is at stake even if we cannot derive how this would have worked out. Dumézil seems to ignore this verse, perhaps because it does not help his case that an original set of incarnations has been effaced. For Dumézil, Pāṇḍu would originally have incarnated Varuṇa; Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Vidura likewise the two "minor sovereigns" Bhaga (god of destinies) and Aryaman (god of Ārya clans); and Yudhiṣthira would have been sired by Mitra were it not that a "clumsy retouch" had replaced Mitra by Dharma (1968, 146–48, 152, 159–60, 170–74). Going well beyond Jamison's assumption "that some version of the epic story of Ambā and her sisters already existed in early Vedic" (1996, 304 n. 94; see n. 95 above), Dumézil was convinced that he could recover a whole *Mahābhārata* whose "primary form [was] contemporary with the oldest Vedic times, or anterior" (172). That idea seems now to be a mirage.[96] But the real point here is that Vyāsa does not get to sire sons who would incarnate *dharma* in the likes and names of Mitra and Varuṇa because

95. Vyāsa's Horse's Head story (on which see chapter 6 § B) is called a "*purāṇa* equal to the Veda (*purāṇaṃ vedasammitam*)" (12.335.7b). Recall that the *Nārāyaṇīya* gets to it by dipping to the outer dialogue frame so that Śaunaka can ultimately hear what Vyāsa said to Janamejaya about the Horse's Head.

96. I say this having once been devoted to the idea ([1976] 1990, 57–59; 1982b), and knowing that interesting connections can still be posited on its basis (see Allen 1996, 2005, 2007*a*, 2007*b*). But the question of genre is too important (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 6–8), and I would agree now with Wulff 2008, 24 that "culture contact" is usually and over all the better answer. See also chapter 1 n. 28 and Hiltebeitel forthcoming-a on the improbability that an Indo-European "tribal" epic could lie at the base of the *Mahābhārata*.

Mother Satyavatī says matters are too pressing to give the widows a year for such a vow. Instead of being a case of lost Vedic symmetries, it is a matter of something willfully set ajar.

It is thus not only on male initiative that we find Aśvamedha pieces set askew. Before Satyavatī gets to Vyāsa, she first tries to enjoin or appoint (*vi-ni-√yuj*; *niyoga*) Bhīṣma to sire sons with his brother's "two *mahiṣīs*." *Can there be two chief queens* (*mahiṣīs*)? This is the only dual of *mahiṣī* (*mahiṣyau*; 1.97.9a) in either epic. The *Rāmāyaṇa*'s first Aśvamedha incongruously requires more than one queen to lie with the horse, but on unequal terms: only Daśaratha's aged queen Kausalyā passes the night with the horse out of desire for *dharma* (*dharmakāmyayā*) as his *mahiṣī*, whereas his other two queens, Kaikeyī and Sumitrā, cast in the well-recognized Aśvamedha roles of the favorite (*vāvātā*) and discarded (*parivṛktī*) wife, respectively, are said only to have also united with the horse, apparently more briefly (*Rām* 1.13.27–28; cf. Jamison 1996, 66, 87, 274 n. 104). Just as the *Rāmāyaṇa* has intelligible narrative reasons to innovate in giving each of Daśaratha's queens some time with the horse, the *Mahābhārata* would have its reasons to be inventive in having two *mahiṣīs*.[97] Yet the reasons are immediately curious, since neither Ambikā nor Ambālikā would be a *mahiṣī* if Ambā were still around. But of course this is Satyavatī speaking, not Vyāsa. It is never explicitly two *mahiṣīs* when Vyāsa lies with Ambikā and Ambālikā. Satyavatī's usage at this point in speaking to Bhīṣma would seem to be a reminder that Ambā's unavailability as a Mother complements Bhīṣma's as a Father, and an intimation that despite the legal incongruity, to speak of Ambikā and Ambālikā as two *mahiṣīs* gives them both an equal chance to become mother of the one desired royal heir.

Here some pieces noted by Biardeau and Jamison also fall into new places. The older of the two widows, Ambikā, should be—now already, but especially next with Vyāsa—not only (as per Biardeau) the single focus of the three names of the Aśvamedha mantra; she should be the single *mahiṣī*. And further (as per Biardeau), not only does Ambikā become a frequent name for the goddess; as Jamison shows, hers is the predominant name among the "three Ambikās"

97. Both epics use the term *mahiṣī* almost exclusively for single chief queens, and where they do otherwise it is with similar discordant notes for the real *mahiṣī*. See, for example, Arjuna, already married to Draupadī, telling Kṛṣṇa his good fortune that Subhadrā will be his *mahiṣī* (*Mbh* 1.211.19); Mantharā telling Kaikeyī that *she* (rather than Kausalyā) is Daśaratha's *mahiṣī* (*Rām* 2.7.19); Sumantra, as her messenger, calling her the *mahiṣī* when he tells Rāma that she and Daśaratha want to see him (14.11); Rāvaṇa inviting Sītā to be his *mahiṣī*, with the odd qualifier that she will be his *agramahiṣī*, "primary chief queen" (3.4.24; 5.18.16)—a term used nowhere else in the epics' Critical Editions, although the Southern Recension finally makes Śakuntalā the *agramahiṣī* of Duṣyanta (Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*d*), and Mandodarī would seem to have that position among the wives of Rāvaṇa. On the other hand, in two plural usages it means mainly "woman" (*Mbh* 1.187.26; *Rām* 2.36.7; see 36.1).

referred to in Rudra's epithet Tryambaka, which refers to Rudra as "possessing three Ambikās."[98] Indeed, although the Aśvamedha mantra's "three mothers" are enough to call for the question of the epic's use of these ritual names, it is worth pressing Jamison's extension to the discussion of the Traiyambaka Homa further to ask whether the epic poets would have been alluding to this rite as well, as Jamison wants to suggest.[99] It would seem that the Traiyambaka Homa's "'husband-finding' spell"—a "somewhat sinister ritual performed outside consecrated ground in an inauspicious, indeed dangerous place," a crossroads—would be an addendum to a year's-end "Four-monthly" rite for a girl who is running out of time in finding a mate, and who, with her parents and no doubt at their urging, is calling on Rudra and his inauspicious sister to apotropaically remove her unfavorable condition (Jamison 1996, 242–44; 303 n. 80). For Ambikā as Rudra's sister is linked with autumn, which in some texts is Rudra's season of "special murderousness" due to her influence (cf. 241, 245, 304 n. 94).[100] All this is fitting for an epic plot in which Ambikā, as a result of her larger failure in meeting the reduced vow demanded by Vyāsa of bearing "my smell, my looks, my garb, and my body" (99.43ab), would be doubled by a second *mahiṣī*, Ambālikā, because Ambikā's son will be blind and unfit to rule.

Further, setting aside her assumption (to my mind unconvincing) that this ritual, like the Aśvamedha, would have complemented an older version of the epic story, Jamison also relates the Traiyambaka Homa to Bhīṣma's abduction of the three Kāśi sisters on two interesting points. First, remarking that "the connection seems hard to gainsay, especially because the sisters also occur in a marriage context," she suggests that "the epic maidens would provide bad role models for the husband-seeking girl of the Sākamedha" (245). Rather than assuming an old para-Vedic story, however, I think it preferable to ask what the epic poets might have made of the model of the Vedic rite. From this angle, the "husband-finder" of the Traiyambakahoma would be a good role model, given her bad situation, for something untoward to go further haywire in an epic

98. Jamison 241, 303 n.76. Although "Tryambaka" may—as usually translated—refer in the epic to Śiva's having three eyes (see Scheuer 1982, 237–36, 255–56), the matter is uncertain (Hopkins [1915] 1969, 220), and in the one case where the *Mbh* gives an etymology (Vyāsa is telling Arjuna how Śiva preceded his chariot in battle), it refers to his having three goddesses: "And since the Lord of the universe possesses three goddesses—Sky, Waters, and Earth—he is remembered as Tryambaka" (7.173.89).

99. See Jamison 1996, 243. The *Mahābhārata* never mentions the *pati-vedana* or the Traiyambaka Homa. Generally, the epics seem to overlook the Caturmāsyāni rites. It does mention a Traiyambaka Bali (7.56.1–4, esp. 3d): according to Scheuer 1982, 255–63, it is probably offered nightly throughout the war on Arjuna's behalf by his servants, after which Arjuna sleeps on the ground surrounded by weapons. Cf. also Scheuer 258 n. 23 on the Pāṇḍavas' offering (*upahāra, bali*) to Rudra Tryambaka (14.8.23–24; 64.1–8) after a night's fasting to get hold of the wealth needed to perform their postwar Aśvamedha.

100. The *Mahābhārata* does know Śiva as "Ambikā's husband" (*ambikabhartre*), yet a *brahmacārin* (7.57.53).

series of turnabouts, which would include Bhīṣma's turning of a husband-finding ritual into a wife-finding one—something even more basic than his turning a woman's-choice *svayaṃvara* into a man's-choice *svayaṃvara*, which, as Jamison observes (1996, 299 n. 38, cited above), he does with verbal precision. Again it would be a matter of inversion via allusion, although in this case less explicitly. Second, Jamison goes on to say that while Ambā became a murderous avenger after the abduction causes her to lose her husband, "[e]ven Ambikā and Ambālikā, though they settled happily enough into their married life after their unexpected abduction . . . , might not have chosen this particular method of pati-vedana [husband-finding] if they had their druthers" (245). But we know they *did* have their druthers. They were going to have a *svayaṃvara*. It would seem that as personifications of "the tryambaka," the three Kāśi sisters would be embodiments of a pretext-*pati-vedana* or "husband-finding" by *svayaṃvara* that goes awry, at least for them, because Bhīṣma carts them off Rākṣasa style to *find* their rather limited *un-chosen* husband Vicitravīrya, whom Ambā in fact rejects.

Of course here we have a way to suggest that if the epic poets recall both Vedic rites, it is separately: the "husband-finding" ritual would underlie the beginning of the three sisters' adventure into the Kuru dynasty. And the Aśvamedha invocation of Ambā, Ambikā, and Ambālikā would underlie the point where Ambikā and Ambālikā—and then Ambikā's Śūdra servant—lie with the smelly misshapen Vyāsa. Once again, there is something askew with the Śūdra servant in place of the oldest Mother Ambā, something that carries forward into the unfolding plot and allows us to move from this one threesome to the next: that is, to the transition from the three Kāśi sisters to Gāndhārī, Kuntī, and Mādrī.

As we approach our skein's last segment, let us take note of three continuities. First, as is apparent by now, in moving from generation one to two through an intensification of Vedic allusions centered on the Aśvamedha, we saw no diminution in allusive references to Mother Goddesses or to Rudra–Śiva. In both cases, we would seem to have cumulative evidence that the *Mahābhārata* either knows or anticipates more "purāṇic" mythology about these deities than it tells us. Is Gaṅgā already married to Śiva when she marries Śaṃtanu and becomes the mother of Bhīṣma? Is there already a Kālī behind Kālī–Satyavatī? Do the three Kāśi sisters, probably from Vārāṇasī, not only recall Vedic affinities with Rudra but already come from a city associated with Śiva?[101] It is unnecessary to push these associations to

101. Biardeau, however, proposes that Kāśi would index Buddhism "where the Buddha preached his first sermon"; the two sisters' distaste for Vyāsa would reflect a Buddhist preference for monks, who would not be drawn into such a scene (2002, 1: 221–22). This seems strained, but, if so, reference to Śiva could cover, as elsewhere, for Buddhism.

a positive answer on each or any count. The important point is that references to Śiva and possible allusions to "later" goddesses also remain prominent in the stories of Gāndhārī and Kuntī. If nothing else, the *Mahābhārata* provides a semiotics for later goddesses to find their syntax with Śiva. Second, we will notice in the movement from generation two to three a certain consistency, along with a downward vector, that one might seek to explain as an incomplete fulfillment of the three goals of human life (the *trivarga*), perhaps complemented by a Dumézilian analysis of incomplete tripartition. While in each generation there are impressive martial (*artha* or second function) feats by Citrāṅgada and Pāṇḍu and excessive amatory (*kāma* or third function) ones by Vicitravīrya and Dhṛtarāṣṭra, righteous pursuits (*dharma* or first function) are compromised, first at the top by Bhīṣma and then at the bottom by Vidura, where *dharma* is derailed from actual rule. Third, just as we may assume it would not have been easy for Bhīṣma and Satyavatī to find a bride for Vicitravīrya, we may assume it will not be so easy for them to find one for Dhṛtarāṣṭra. As we move from the three Mothers of generation two to the three Mothers of generation three, there will be in each case a seniormost mother (Ambā, Gāndhārī) connected with Śiva who either rejects marriage into the line (Ambā) or marries into its most unpromising senior branch after the line itself has split (Gāndhārī).

F. Mothers Kuntī and Gāndhārī

So Bhīṣma once again brings in three women: Gāndhārī (103.9–17), Kuntī, and Mādrī (105.1–6). As these accounts unfold, two things become apparent. First, it quickly emerges that our skein makes Kuntī its new rising star,[102] for between Gāndhārī's marriage and her own, a whole *adhyāya* (104) is dedicated to Kuntī's childhood. She is the only woman marrying into the chief royal line of either epic whom we get to know well as a girl, and not only now but through her own adult recollections. Second, this is the first generation in this skein in which there is rivalry between "cowives." Although there is rivalry between cowives in the lineage before our skein (see Dumézil 1973, 16–18; Defourny 1978, 107–37; Brodbeck 2009*a*, 128–29), the present case takes us back above all—as Gaṅgā and Kālī–Satyavatī did to the female weavers Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ—to a prototype from the early prolegomenal matter in Book 1: in this case, the rivalry between Kadrū and

102. Allowing for overlap and not counting descriptions of their sons at birth, from 103.9 to its end at 119.12 our skein gives 195 verses to Kuntī, eighty-five to Mādrī, and thirty-six to Gāndhārī.

Vinatā, the cowives of the Ṛṣi Kaśyapa and the mothers of snakes and birds.[103] Gāndhārī and Kuntī compete over who will be the first to give their husbands an heir, and then Kuntī and Madrī show some rivalry. If one recalls that Kuntī is Kṛṣṇa's paternal aunt, one has one of the reasons why these rivalries revolve around her, and why she is pivotal to the change, noticed in the previous section, to Vyāsa and Kṛṣṇa in the handling of the family's dynastic fortunes. Yet even as Kuntī becomes salient, our skein—right down to its well-marked end—keeps all three generations of women (Gaṅgā, on this point, excepted) in the living picture.

Bhīṣma prefaces his renewed matchmaking in a passage we have already noticed. Addressing Vidura, he mentions the continuity (*saṃtāna*) now established in the persons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu, and Vidura as "threads of the line" (103.3). But although Bhīṣma mentions Vidura as one of the "threads," he rather tries to draw him into being one of the threaders: "For this lineage to grow like the ocean, son, I, but especially you, must take care . . ." (103.4). Bhīṣma speaks favorably of three royal lines he considers to have produced suitable brides for Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu, and, saying he thinks these prospects should be wooed, asks Vidura's opinion. But Vidura demurs: "You are our father, our mother, and our supreme guru"; Bhīṣma should decide and act on these matters himself (5–8). Calling Bhīṣma "mother" here could suggest that Satyavatī, Ambikā, and Ambālikā are not being consulted.

Biardeau offers an incisive key to interpreting Bhīṣma's choices: Kuntī's link with the earth, most notably through her name Pṛthā, is with the earth totally, even though her Yādava people are not associated with any land, whereas the names of Gāndhārī (Woman of Gāndhāra) and Mādrī (Woman of Madra) identify them only by their lands, and with neighboring northwestern lands ruled by or associated with incarnate demons in an area propagated by Buddhism (2002, 1: 231–33). Indeed, Madrī is even called Bāhlīkī (Woman of Bactria)[104] once (1.116.21a), when Kuntī says how lucky Mādrī was to have been the last to see Pāṇḍu's face making love.

103. See *Mbh* 1.13.35–14, 18–23, 30.11–35, and 49.3–16. Kadrū and Vinatā's parallels with Gāndhārī and Kuntī, widely noted, include rivalry, use of pots for gestation, and the servitude of the one's sons to the other's. Although the parallels crisscross (most notably, it is Vinatā who has a long and aborted gestation), Gāndhārī has more in common with Kadrū (mother of a thousand snakes) and Kuntī with Vinatā (mother of two birds). But the key theme of a mother (Kadrū) cursing her sons is unparalleled, unless one reads Gāndhārī's boon as a parallel, or perhaps Kuntī's abandonment of Karṇa.

104. Karṇa mocks the low conduct of Madras at *Mbh* 8.27–30, once mentioning Gāndhāras, Madras, and Bāhlīkas (Bactrians) together (27.55cd), particularly deriding Madra women. See Biardeau 2002, 2: 313–15 and n. 11 on the Vāhīka-Bāhlīkas, inclusive of Madras, as (by Karṇa's etymological tale) those from outside Āryavarta, descended not from Prajāpati but from two "ghastly" Piśācas who now inhabit the former Vedic heartland of the Punjab (cf. Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 272–73). This Āryavarta corresponds, in fact, to the Buddhist *majhimadesa* described in chapter 7 § B.2.

Dumézil, however, appears to have made the most cogent attempt to interpret these three marriages as an ensemble, taking Bhīṣma to have implemented them in trifunctional order as "un théorie en action des modes archaïques de marriage" (1979, 71). Dhṛtarāṣṭra's marriage with Gāndhārī, who is "given" to him by her father, mother, and brother (*Mbh* 1.103.11e, 12c, 15a) with a large dowry (14c), has earmarks of a Brāhma-mode marriage; Kuntī's "self-choice" (*svayaṃvara*) of Pāṇḍu comes next; and Pāṇḍu's marriage to Mādrī by purchasing her would be an Āsura-mode wedding (69–71). Dumézil thinks the operative theory would be older than the classical enumeration of eight types of marriage in which the Brāhma mode can be deemed suitable for Brahmins; the *svayaṃvara*—discounted in the *dharmaśāstra* lists—special, as we have seen in § D above, in the epics, at least, for Kṣatriyas; and the Āsura mode for Vaiśyas and Śūdras (33). But again, while the theory may be old and parallelled by marriage sequences in other Indo-European heroic traditions, this does not give the "entire episode" a special "antiquity" (70). Rather than reflecting an older account of an archaic trifunctional order translated and updated into terms of classical *dharma*, the epic continues to have Bhīṣma arrange marriages in which *dharma* remains askew. Kuntī's marriage to Pāṇḍu does not seem to present any immediate *dharma* problems, but considering that Kuntī's Yādava origins connect her only loosely with a royal lineage,[105] it is not clear why she would be having a *svayaṃvara* at which to have rather miraculously "found (*avindata*)"[106] Pāṇḍu "in the midst of a thousand kings" (105.2cd)! Mādrī's marriage in the Āsura mode can also be complicated, as Dumézil acknowledges elsewhere (1968, 75–76), since her brother Śalya is an incarnate Asura or demon.[107] But it is especially in finding a bride for Dhṛtarāṣṭra that Bhīṣma sets things askew.

Here, where Dumézil sees the most "august" of the Indo-European "procedures 'civilisés'" reserved for Dhṛtarāṣṭra, his handling shows the strain of his compartmentalization. Dumézil presents as lofty a picture as he can: "had it not been for his infirmity," Dhṛtarāṣṭra "would have been king," and his blindness is a kind of insight (1979, 70). But he fails to appreciate that in arranging for Dhṛtarāṣṭra to receive a bride as a *gift*, Bhīṣma enables a violation of the Kṣatriya ethos of not accepting gifts that he himself had so ably put on

105. The Yādavas descend from Yadu, son of the lunar dynasty ancestor Yayāti, who cursed Yadu and his descendants to have "no share of royalty" (*Mbh* 1.79.7). A Northern (N) passage (1.1129*) compounds the story at this point, having Kuntibhoja arrange the *svayaṃvara* when no king had asked for Kuntī's hand!

106. Cf. Brockington 2006, 38. We see again in this formation from √*vid* that a *svayaṃvara* could be a kind of "husband-finding" (*pati-vedana*).

107. A lengthy N passage (*Mbh* 1, App. I, No. 61) has Śalya, already king of Madra, stipulate that his sister's purchase is a matter, whether good (*sādhu*) or not, of what his family (*kule*; lines 24–25) has always done.

record when he *took* the three Kāśi sisters *ungiven* yet *gave* them to Vicitravīrya.[108] This time, when Bhīṣma goes to extraordinary measures to get someone else to give a bride to a problem child, it is not in an "august" remnant of a more civilized time but in the sad light of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's blindness. Indeed, when King Subala of Gāndhāra receives Bhīṣma's messenger, he agrees in mind (*buddhyā*) about the groom's lineage, fame, and conduct, but only after considering (*prasamīkṣya*) that Dhṛtarāṣṭra is blind (103.11; cf Brodbeck 2009*a*, 168). But it is when Bhīṣma first hears about Gāndhārī herself that we might wonder how desperate, or perhaps heedless, he is:

> Then Bhīṣma heard from Brahmins that Subala's daughter Gāndhārī had propitiated the boon-granting god who took the eyes of Bhaga, Hara (*bhaganetraharaṃ haram*), and that the auspicious Gāndhārī, it was said, had obtained the boon of a hundred sons. (103.9)

The associations with Śiva of course continue, but their ominousness is now rather evident. As we descend into blindness along with this bride who will be *given*, Śiva is doubly Hara, the god who "takes" or "removes," and what he removes is sight itself from the god of destinies—something that might complement what we have understood so far: that Dhṛtarāṣṭra's blindness resulted from Little Mother Ambikā's shock upon seeing Vyāsa. If Bhīṣma is "taking care" in selecting this bride, it would seem to have been bad judgment on his part, at least knowing of this boon from Śiva, for thinking a hundred sons was a good idea,[109] and on Vidura's part for giving Bhīṣma carte blanche in all the matchmaking.

Gāndhārī, a woman who fares in *dharma*—a *dharmacāriṇī* (1.103.11ef)—has already been given by her father when we meet her. Realizing that her mother and father wish to give her to a blind man (12), she blindfolds her eyes and says, at least literally, "I would not eat before my husband" (*nātyaśnīyāṃ patim aham*; 13e). In saying this, she is twice said to be "vowing utter fidelity to her husband" (13d; 17b); but taken along with Vaiśaṃpāyana's *adhyāya*-closing statement that she never again mentioned "other men" (17cd), her first curt and haunting words could suggest that the bandaging of her eyes is not only an act of spousal consolidarity and deference (not eating before one's husband is

108. See Hara 1974, 304–5; Jamison 1996, 235; and Heesterman 2001, 255 n. 31, on the Kṣatriya's "warrior ethos, which forbids him to accept, let alone ask for gifts," as an underlying explanation for the Rākṣasa mode of marriage.

109. A hundred sons is not inherently a bad boon. Sāvitrī gets Yama's boon of a hundred sons to trick him into keeping her husband alive, and the same number for her husband's parents (*Mbh* 3.381.44–58). Here the number seems to signal the spread of a martial clan (as it does where the Kauravas are worshiped as clan deities in the Tamil cult mentioned in § B above).

just ordinary good behavior) but a curbing of her desire—about which there is more that can be said. *Mahābhārata* folklore of northwest Tamilnadu knows an irresistibly pertinent story. Gāndhārī once wanted to make Duryodhana invulnerable by the power amassed from bandaging her eyes. She would lift her bandage to see him, and told him to come before her naked. But Kṛṣṇa got Duryodhana's sister Duḥśalā to appear, and Duryodhana, feeling shy, covered his genitals and thighs with a banana leaf, leaving that area vulnerable when Gāndhārī looked. The subtext of desire is evident: Gāndhārī wanted to see her son naked. And the banana leaf could suggest that Duryodhana sensed that she wanted not only to see but eat, which could recall what she says in Sanskrit about not eating before her husband.[110] For now, however, we must appreciate that Dhṛtarāṣṭra's Little Mother Ambikā and his fiancée Gāndhārī have both closed their eyes around their desires. But whereas Ambikā did so for only a fairly short but fateful time—maybe just upon first seeing Vyāsa, probably for the duration of their unpleasant encounter—Gāndhārī has vowed to close them for a lifetime.

Before the Critical Edition gets to Vaiśaṃpāyana's briefer descriptions of Bhīṣma's arrangements for Kuntī and Mādrī to marry Pāṇḍu, it now pauses for an *adhyāya*, as noted, over Kuntī's childhood to tell how she became a mother even while remaining a *kanyā*, and to explain her secrecy about Karṇa, the son she bore and abandoned "to hide her misconduct and out of fear of her relations" (1.104.13cd). Like Gaṅgā, Kuntī puts her son in a river,[111] and like Satyavatī she gets to remain a *kanyā* and hides the youthful affair from her adoptive relatives.[112] But in Kuntī's case, compared with Satyavatī's, being a *kanyā* has more the surcharge of her being "just a girl."[113] Unlike Satyavatī, Kuntī does not bargain to remain a virgin, she just remains a girl: indeed, in a fuller version of her story, "a free female" (*svatantrā*). In that elaboration, Sūrya offers gratis that she will remain a *kanyā* even after their union, clarifying with a contrived but surprising etymology: "O sweet-smiler, neither your father, mother, nor elders prevail; hail to you of choice hips. Hear my word. A free female (*svatantrā*),

110. Perundevi Srinivasan is gathering variants of this story. I thank her for her thoughts on the banana leaf.

111. Of course, whereas Gaṅgā "immersed" (*amajjayat*; 92.44d) her first seven sons as they wished so that they could return to heaven, Kuntī "abandoned," "cast," or "poured out" (*utsasarja*; 104.13c) Karṇa to a life of earthly resentments.

112. Their adoptions are curious. Both have their premarital affairs apart from their "real" parents (Satyavatī's mother being an Apsaras-turned-fish). They also attenuate their already loose ties to royal lines. And Kuntī's foreshadows that of Karṇa.

113. Van Buitenen captures this sense in translating what Kuntī says when she tells Karṇa shortly before the war how she conceived him: "Then, out of curiosity and childishness, . . . I, being just a girl (*kanyā satī*), made the Sun god come to me" (5.142.21, 23–25; van Buitenen 1978, 452). Van Buitenen 1973, 241 missed the opportunity to translate *kanyā satī* in this fashion at 1.104.8cd. Cf. Oliver 1993, 54 on Kristeva's view of "virginity."

since she desires all (*sarvān kāmayate yasmāt*), is called *kanyā* from the root *kan*" (3.291.12–13). Sūrya says, I believe, that as a free female, a girl is free to desire the world (or all things) and to make the world (or all things) desirable.[114] Known from birth as Pṛthā—"the Wide," evoking the Broad Earth Pṛthivī and her "girlish wide eyes" (*kanyām . . . pṛthām pṛthulalocanām*; 3.287.12cd)—she is the eldest child of the Yādava chief Śūra and older sister of Vasudeva (who is perhaps still yet to become Kṛṣṇa's father), and she gets her name Kuntī from her adoptive father Kuntibhoja, the otherwise childless son of Śūra's father's sister, because Śūra had promised and given Kuntibhoja his firstborn child as "a friend to a great-souled friend" (*sakhā sakhye mahātmane*; 1.104.1–3). This exchange is not one that Kuntī will later recall happily. As she tells Kṛṣṇa during his prewar embassy to the Kauravas,

> I censure not myself nor Suyodhana,[115] but my father by whom I was transferred to Kuntibhoja as wealth is by rogues. I was a child playing with a ball in my hand when your grandfather gave me to Kuntibhoja as a friend to a great-souled friend! I was humiliated (*nikṛtā*) by my father and maternal uncles,[116] Foe-scorcher. (5.88.61–63b)

Yet from this disquieting friendship unfolds the friendship of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna and a hidden friendship between Kṛṣṇa and Karṇa that we will return to in chapter 12 (see Hiltebeitel 2007*b*, 30–31). For now, however, the focus is on how Kuntī got the mantra that made her a special kind of mother:

> In her father's [Kuntibhoja's] house she was appointed (*niyuktā*) to the honoring of Gods and guests; and so she came once to serve that fierce and terrible Brahmin of strict vows whose design in *dharma* is hidden (*nigūḍhaniścayaṃ dharme*), whom they know as Durvāsas. This fierce man of honed spirit she satisfied with all her efforts, and the Muni, with foresight into the Law of Distress (*āpaddharma-anvavekṣayā*), gave her a mantra combined with sorcery (*mantram . . . abhicāra-abhisaṃyuktam*) and said to her: "Whichever God you call up with this mantra, by this or that one's grace there will be a son for you." When that Brahmin had said this, from curiosity, and being just a girl (*kanyā satī*), the famous one then invoked the Sun God. . . . (1.104.4–8)

114. The causative *kāmayate* (√*kam*) reads either way; √*kan* means "to be satisfied or pleased; to agree to, to accept with satisfaction; to please, be liked or wished for."

115. A name for Duryodhana: Biardeau (2002, 1: 886 n. 4, 900) suggests, "Easy to combat."

116. *Śvaśura* (plural): usually "fathers-in-law" (see van Buitenen 1978, 370), but "also applied to a maternal uncle and any venerable person" (MW 1105). This is surely Kuntī's meaning. She is complaining about her father's deal with a maternal uncle, and had no fathers-in-law yet (she calls Vyāsa her *śvaśura* at 15.38.1a).

From this momentous passage, whose essentials Kuntī herself will soon rephrase,[117] we need only know that Durvāsas is an irascible and inveterately hungry Ṛṣi who incarnates Śiva, to sense all that would be at work when, with "foresight in *āpaddharma*" and as "one whose design in *dharma* is hidden," he gives this sorcerous Mother-making mantra to this wide-eyed girl.

In the fullest version of this story, Kuntibhoja charges Kuntī to give to Durvāsas ungrudgingly or disinterestedly (*amatsarāt*; 3.287.15d), to which she replies, "It is by my own nature (*svabhāva*) that I would honor the twiceborn" (288.2ab)—powerful words from a girl. Here no sorcery is mentioned, but she seems to paralyze the god (289.17–18), and Sūrya calls Kuntī *mattakāśinī* (291.21), which could be "bewitching one." Much later, when she asks Vyāsa to raise the slain Karṇa from the Gaṅgā so she can see him while Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī also see the slain Kauravas, she has more rueful memories: that Durvāsas and Sūrya both threatened to curse her, and that she again became a *kanyā* by the god's grace as Durvāsas had foretold (15.38.1–17). Here she also recalls that Durvāsas told her she would become the mother of Dharma (*dharmasya jananī*; 6a)! In any case, as we shall soon see, not only the gods but all the Ṛṣis must know that Kuntī keeps her secret sorcerous knowledge into her marriage to Pāṇḍu as part of her "innate" service to the twiceborn, and thus to the Ṛṣis themselves. This makes it part of the divine plan. But more than this, again something we could call primordial is drawn from the distaff side into the Kuru line: this time in a secret that the gods and Ṛṣis keep with a "free female" girl made old (as a mother) before her time. I would suggest that some such sense lies behind an understanding of Pṛthā–Kuntī in the north Indian *Mahābhārata* folklore of sub-Himalayan Garhwal, where she is renowned for her great old age in the Pāṇḍav Līlās (dance-dramas about the Pāṇḍavas and company) and known as the *elder* sister of Bhūmī, Mother Earth (Sax 2002, 71–74)! In one story, Arjuna follows her and Draupadī—his mother and his wife—only to find out who they really are: the chief "hags" among the Sixty-Four Yoginīs, with Kuntī the eldest among them, who appear before him as vultures to forecast the *Mahābhārata* war (Sax 2002, 153–55; cf. 144). "Hags" is Sax's translation of Garhwali *pañcāli*, "bird" (Hindi *pakṣī*), evoking Draupadī's name Pāñcālī. Note that Kuntī and Draupadī are birds, of whom one is soon reminded—along with the archetypal story of Kadrū and Vinatā—by the story of Gāndhārī's pregnancy.

117. She repeats much of 1.104.4–6 at 1.113.31–33, condensing "gods and guests" to the essential "guests," and speaks of her "sacrifices" (*yajñair*) rather then "efforts" (*yatnair*).

As Gāndhārī's story is told, it mirrors Kuntī's in ways that deepen their differences around themes we have been discussing.

> Gāndhārī once satisfied Dvaipāyana [Vyāsa] when he had arrived exhausted with hunger and fatigue. Vyāsa granted her a boon. (*Mbh* 1.107.7)

Vyāsa's hunger, elsewhere unheard of, is here to match that of Durvāsas, which in Kuntī's story is only implicit yet there by his ornery reputation. Each Ṛṣi is "satisfied" using the same verbal root *tuṣ*: just as Kuntī "satisfied" (*atoṣayat*; 104.5c) Durvāsas, an incarnation of Śiva, and Gāndhārī "satisfied" (*toṣayām āsa*; 107.7c) Vyāsa, an incarnation of Viṣṇu–Nārāyaṇa. Their involvements thus reflect the intertwined workings of the two major gods, and not just on the sides where one would expect them. Yet if these two Ṛṣis are similarly satisfied, they reward their hostesses differently. Durvāsas gives an unsolicited mantra to a curious unmarried wide-eyed girl that opens the world ahead of her. Vyāsa gives a boon or choice (*varam*) to a married woman who has closed her eyes to the world, who now chooses—and there is no saying what else she could have chosen—only to go deeper into her own darkness by fine-tuning the troublesome boon that she has already gotten from Śiva: "She chose that her hundred sons would resemble her husband (*sadṛśam bhartuḥ*)" (107.8ab)—a man whom she had never seen, and how they should resemble him she does not say (it is tempting to take *sadṛśam*, "resembling, similar to, with the appearance *or look of*," as a pun on Dhṛtarāṣṭra's blindness).[118] Indeed, Vyāsa had already predicted at Dhṛtarāṣṭra's conception that this son of his would have a hundred powerful (*mahābalāḥ*) sons (100.10ab), so if Gāndhārī adds anything, it is not to their strength. And while it is not clear whether Vyāsa adds anything at this point either, the outcome is that Gāndhārī will have all her sons, plus an unasked-for daughter gratis,[119] the aforementioned Duḥśalā, all in one horrendous two-year pregnancy that she interrupts only to abort it when she hears that Kuntī has had a son "of splendor like the

118. Cf. Biardeau 202, 1: 230: to wish for sons like their father is "the wish of every *femme dharmique*, but is it wise in this case?" As with Gāndhārī's utterance when she puts on her blindfold, her everyday wifely sentiments sound foreboding. Brodbeck 2009*a*, 168–69, however, implies that Śiva's and Vyāsa's boons to Gāndhārī are the same.

119. In a widely found *adhyāya* (omitted only in four N mss., including the important Śāradā one [on which see Sukthankar 1933, lxv]), Gāndhārī interrupts Vyāsa to ask for a daughter (1 Appendix I, no. 63, after 1.107; Ganguli [1884–96] 1970, 1: 260–61). I stress this daughter's gratis appearance because it parallels Draupadī's unasked-for birth (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 187), which—in Draupadī's case—makes it part of the divine plan, for Draupadī is born specifically to do *surakārya*, "the work of the gods" (*Mbh* 1.155.45; see chapters 10, 12). I would not agree that Duḥśālā "is apparently no part of Vyāsa's plans for the fleshball" (Brodbeck 2009*a*, 170).

morning sun (*bālārkasamatejasam*)" (107.10ab)—presumably Yudhiṣṭhira but sounding (no doubt intentionally) more like Karṇa, as is also the case when Gāndhārī tells Vyāsa just after this that she aborted her belly because she had "heard that the eldest son of Kuntī (*jyeṣṭhaṃ kuntīsutam*) was born of splendor like the sun (*ravisamaprabham*)" (107.15).[120] It would seem that we are entitled to fantasize. Although *jyeṣṭha* could mean "most excellent" rather than "eldest," the latter very common meaning, when referring to siblings, would suggest that Gāndhārī knows that Kuntī now has more than one son! Yet it would still take a lot to explain why Gāndhārī would be jealous about a déclassé son born years ago out of wedlock, or why she would be referring to Karṇa while really worrying about Yudhiṣṭhira. The ambiguity would seem to foreshadow the emerging affinities, despite their opposition, between Karṇa and Yudhiṣṭhira as the two most legitimate heirs to the throne. In any case, Gāndhārī's miscarriage requires Vyāsa himself to save the day, as it were, by dividing the mass of flesh into a hundred and one pieces while giving directions on how to let them continue to gestate in pots.[121]

Even though we cannot be sure whose birth Gāndhārī is talking about, much less how she could have heard about the birth of either Karṇa or Yudhiṣṭhira at this point, her hearing about Kuntī's sunlike firstborn son makes their rivalry the turning point in the Kauravas' birthing. This simultaneity was important enough to have required this seeming mention of Yudhiṣṭhira's birth before our skein actually gets to it, and to interrupt the narrative of Pāṇḍu's strange reign—at least in the Critical Edition, which again, I believe, shows the soundness of defaulting to the Northern Recension where the Southern Recension gives the story differently.[122] In the Critical Edition, Pāṇḍu's rule is narrated in two stages that cover three phases of his career, with the middle phase interrupted by the story of Gāndhārī's pregnancy. These three phases

120. As Brodbeck has noted (personal communication), and, though I take the possibility that these allusions are to Karṇa from him, he credits them (Brodbeck 2009*a*, 170 n. 12) to Bowles 2008, 1: 44 n. 5.

121. *Mbh* 1.107.13–23. Biardeau 2002, 1: 233 finds it tempting to link Gāndhārī's name Saubaleyī here with the *bali* offerings (one of the five *mahāyajñas*) made to inferior divinities and thrown on the ground.

122. As Sukthankar 1933, 474–75 shows, the Southern Recension's "entirely different" handling of 1.106.11–114.15ff. makes the Pāṇḍava and Kaurava princes' births follow one temporal line. Beginning with an excision of 109.1–4 where Janamajaya asks Vaiśaṃpāyana to *return* to the story of the Pāṇḍavas' partial divine incarnations, it does not divide Pāṇḍu's story by Gāndhārī's, and continues with Pāṇḍu's from 109.5 through Yudhiṣṭhira's birth before it gets to Gāndhārī's pregnancy. Meanwhile, as S joins 107.8 to 111.12 to make Pāṇḍu's story continuous, it drops the first reference to Gāndhārī's learning of Kuntī's sunlike son (107.10), and once it has recounted her pregnancy, supplies six lines (1135*) to take one back to Pāṇḍu's plight. Gāndhārī's remaining mention of Kuntī's sunlike child (107.15) is thus deferred to follow Yudhiṣṭhira's birth (114.1–7), eliminating any ambiguity as to who he is and diminishing her rivalry with Kuntī. The extensive revision is another example of S's replacement of ambiguity and literary experimentation with a flatter and more easily communicated orderliness. See Hiltebeitel 2006*a*, 252–53; forthcoming-*a*; forthcoming-*d*; Mahadevan 2008.

clearly follow the one-sided role models set for him by his three or four "fathers."[123] The first (105.6–106.5) begins when he has married Mādrī:

> When he had wed her, Pāṇḍu, who was endowed with both strength and enterprise, desired to conquer the earth and went at his enemies in all their multitudes. (105.7)

In this expansionist[124] martial phase, he is like Citrāṅgada and/or Bhīṣma, but his conquests—most notably in Magadha as part of a drive to the east (105.10–12)—now take place in a "real" political geography that will also challenge his Pāṇḍava sons (see Biardeau 2002, 1: 225). Note that when Pāṇḍu returns and greets the feet of his "father" (105.25), the narrator is referring to "father" Bhīṣma just as Pāṇḍu is about to deliver the war booty to him, Satyavatī, and Ambālikā, with something too for Vidura (106.1–2). Second is a phase of hunting life, in two parts. First, before we hear about Gāndhārī's pregnancy, we learn that Pāṇḍu was provisioned in the forests by his brother Dhṛtarāṣṭra and joined there by his two wives in an amorous setting.[125] Then after the narration of Gāndhārī's boon and the births of the hundred Kauravas (107–8), Pāṇḍu shoots a Ṛṣi named Kiṃdama,[126] who is mating while disguised as a deer (109.5–31). According to the dying Kiṃdama, Pāṇḍu is now tinged with lust and greed (109.11cd), which Pāṇḍu then links back to the lustfulness of Vicitravīrya as a strong vice he must get rid of (110.2–6). Note that Kiṃdama curses Pāṇḍu because of his cruelty in shooting a mating creature, which was "most unrighteous" (*adharmiṣṭham*; 21d) because it "frustrated a cherished fruit of the *puruṣārthas*" (19e; cf. 23d)—that is, the *trivarga*—which, as a king, Pāṇḍu was supposed to protect. Finally, Pāṇḍu's third phase (110.3–116.12) occurs under Kiṃdama's curse that he too will die should he engage in the act of love. Even though he manages to have sons before he dies under these conditions, "his last years pass without his exercising his royal duties in a normal manner" (Biardeau 2002, 1: 237). Here Pāṇḍu's turn to sexual continence puts him again in the same league as Bhīṣma. But more than this, what motivates him to practice *tapas* is the example of his "real" father Vyāsa (110.3–6, 29); and if Vyāsa is his model, it could also motivate Pāṇḍu's eventual incontinence.[127]

123. Cf. Brodbeck 2009*a*, 175, making do with having Pāṇḍu "imitate aspects" of only two fathers, Vyāsa and Vicitravīrya. The additional two would be Bhīṣma and Citrāṅgada.

124. See 102.12; 105.19–23 and 26: he reclaims kingdoms (*rāṣṭrāṇi*) the Kurus had lost, and takes captives from them.

125. *Mbh* 1.106.6–11. Biardeau 2002, 1: 235 says Pāṇḍu is now living an irresponsible life, having given up his responsibilities in the capital.

126. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 226 n. 3: This Ṛṣi "is not a model of asceticism," his name meaning "Who has some self-mastery," "More or less master of himself."

127. Vyāsa sires his first son Śuka by ejaculating after seeing a nymph transformed into a female parrot (12.311.1–10; see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 286–87), and also interrupts his *tapas* to sire Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu, and Vidura.

Throughout all this, poor Pāṇḍu seems to have only increasing difficulties with this fractured paternal imago, and gets very little from his silent mothers. What good fortune he has must come from his wives, who love him.

Still following the Critical Edition and the Northern Recension, we now come to the turning point in the life of Kuntī, Mādrī, and Pāṇḍu. In four verses that the Southern Recension discards (109.1–4; see n. 122 above), King Janamejaya, having heard about Gāndhārī's pregnancy and the news she gets of Kuntī's sunlike child, now asks Vaiśaṃpāyana to tell him in full about the Pāṇḍavas' births as partial incarnations of gods. It is these verses that prompt Vaiśaṃpāyana to relate the story of Pāṇḍu's deer hunt and Kiṃdama's curse, which occurs, of course, in both recensions: Pāṇḍu will die "when you are lying with a woman you love, overcome by love, blinded by your passion," moving in that happiness not only himself but bringing about the death of the beloved he lies with, who will follow him out of devotion (*bhakti*), coming under the sway of the King of Ghosts.[128] It could be either wife, and it is clearly bad news for both of them even if it is not clear what they learn about the curse. There is nothing to indicate that they heard it uttered, or what Pāṇḍu told them about it. All we know is this: when the deer-Ṛṣi died after speaking, Pāṇḍu was overwhelmed with grief (*śokārtaḥ*); then together with his wives he was stricken with grief and sorrow (*śokaduḥkhārtaḥ*) as they lamented the deer like a kinsman (109.31–110.1)! As Pāṇḍu turns his mind to asceticism, he speaks only of how all this affects him. And with that we embark on the third and last phase of his career—modeled, as he says, after Vyāsa—and the point toward which this chapter (and indeed, our whole skein) has been driving: his dialogue with Kuntī. But we cannot get there before another intervention by the Ṛṣis.

G. Kuntī, Mādrī, and Pāṇḍu among the Hundred Peak Mountain Ṛṣis

Pāṇḍu now utters one of the *Mahābhārata*'s moving evocations of the renunciant life, holding it up as a sad but also beautiful ideal that the epic, however, will not allow its householder kings to live. Indeed, it will be like father like son all over again. Just after Pāṇḍu says he will emulate his father Vyāsa by yoking himself to austerities (110.6), he expresses himself in a train of thought (110.7–18) that *his* son Yudhiṣṭhira will also follow, quite precisely from point to point and using

128. *Mbh* 1.109.28–30. The description suggests that this double Liebestod under Yama's sway could evoke Yama's connections with possession; see chapter 8 § D.2.b.

many of the exact same words, phrases, and lines,[129] when he says he wants to renounce the world after the war upon Kuntī's revelation that Karṇa was his elder brother. No matter how poignantly such a royal householder expresses this ideal, it moves his household to speak against it, and Pāṇḍu's entire household at this time and place is Kuntī and Mādrī, who now protest when he finishes this speech, which seems to ask them, while he remains behind to begin a life of solitude, to accompany Pāṇḍu's retinue (there are unnamed Brahmins, followers, and servants with them [110.37, 39]) to Hāstinapura, the City of the Elephant, to bring the court there word of his decision (110.22–24). Saying the same words jointly (25), Kuntī and Mādrī reply,

> There are other stages of life (*anye . . . āśramāḥ*) that you can undertake together with us, your wives by the Law (*dharmapatnīs*), O Bharata Bull, and still do great austerities. And you surely and without fail will find heaven too. We shall abjure all our senses and, devoted to our husband's world and forsaking the pleasures of love, we too shall undertake severe austerities. If you desert us, wise king who are the lord of your people, then of a certainty we shall give up our lives this very day. (110.26–28)

Kuntī and Mādrī thus speak jointly as *dharmapatnīs* (not as co-*mahiṣīs*) to redirect Pāṇḍu toward an *āśrama* or "life-stage" that allows their participation.[130] If that is their will, he says, he will be a *vānaprastha* with them and follow the "harsh and ever harsher rule (*vidhi*) of the *Forest Treatises*" (110.34–35). Although only Pāṇḍu mentions texts, his two *dharma*-wives would seem to know the gist of what is in them. The three now remove their royal paraphernalia for their retinue to take back to Hāstinapura along with word of his decision (36–40); and when Dhṛtarāṣṭra hears "from them as to all that had happened in the great forest, he mourned after Pāṇḍu" (41). Although Vaiśaṃpāyana has by now (in the Critical Edition) told Janamejaya about Dhṛtarāṣṭra's hundred sons, Gāndhārī has not yet had them. But the race is on and no one could now expect Kuntī to become a mother.

129. *Mbh* 12.9.12–28; see Klaes 1975, 113, 129 n. 10; Fitzgerald 2002, 670 n. to *Mbh* 12.308.36. Yudhiṣṭhira first projects himself as a solitary *vānaprastha* (12.9.1–11; Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 685); but then, as his begging shows, he sees himself as a renunciant. The parallels are as follows: 1.110.7–9 ≈ 12.9.12–14; 1.110.10 ≈ 12.9.17; 1.110.11 ≈ 12.9.16 (with a verse-order reversal); 1.110.12ab ≈ 12.9.23ab; 1.110.14 = 12.9.25 excepting a verb; 1.110.15 = 12.9.24 except for a word-reversal; and 1.110.16–18 ≈ 12.9.26–28, with 16ab = 26ab, 17b = 27b, and 18cd = 28cd about seeking "the Law (*dharman*) of the wind." Most likely Pāṇḍu's is the trunk version while Yudhiṣṭhira is given some intermittent fancies (e.g., he will be the last after-hours guest on his begging rounds [12.9.22]) before each concludes on a distinctive note: doggish lust in Pāṇḍu's case, perhaps his way of recalling the mating deer he just shot; and massive guilt in Yudhiṣṭhira's.

130. Compare the situation with Yudhiṣṭhira mentioned in the previous note. He starts out envisioning the *vānaprastha* mode and then, perhaps aware that his wife and brothers have had their fill of the forest, raises the stakes to a renunciatory mode.

The three now start off into the Himalayas, crossing over certain mountains—Himavat, Gandhamādana (220.42–43)—that their sons and Draupadī's travels will make more familiar.[131] But their further journey, on which they begin to be "protected by Great Beings (*mahābhūtas*, possibly the five elements), Perfected Ones (Siddhas), and the Supreme Ṛṣis (Paramarṣis)," takes them to Mount Śataśṛṅga, the Hundred-Peak Mountain (110.44–45), a destination that is otherwise, it seems, virtually uncharted.[132] But I believe it is invoked by Damayantī when she is estranged from her husband Nala and addresses a mountain somewhere in central India:

> O best of mountains, have you with your hundred peaks (*śṛṅgaśatair*)
> that scrape the sky perchance seen king Nala in this terrible forest?
> (3.61.50)

What is most pertinent about this turning point in the famous love story of Nala and Damayantī, a "mirror story" to the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī's own forest troubles,[133] is that just after Damayantī appeals to this mountain, she turns north and walks for three days and nights (56) only to come upon a miraculous "circle of hermitages" (93d) "looking like a heavenly park" (57) populated by Ṛṣi-Muni ascetics (*tāpasaḥ*) "the likes of Vasiṣṭha, Bhṛgu, and Atri," who "lived on water or off the wind, or fed on leaves" (58–59). Just as the Ṛṣis are now protecting Pāṇḍu, Kuntī, and Madrī—but especially, as we shall see, the two women—these Ṛṣis (really, "the same" Ṛṣis) have apparently heeded Damayantī's call to the hundred-peaked mountain and have arranged for her to find them so that they can reassure her that she will find Nala, "the best of *dharma*'s upholders," restored to her and to his kingdom (88)—only to vanish, along with their hermitages, leaving her amazed and wondering whether she had seen them and their hermitages only in a dream (93).

But whereas Damayantī brings the Ṛṣis of the north to central India, Kuntī, Mādrī, and Pāṇḍu scale the Ṛṣis' Hundred-Peak Mountain themselves. For four verses, the focus is entirely on Pāṇḍu as he "became dear to the sight of the hosts of Siddhas and Cāraṇas" (111.1):

> To some he became a brother, to some he became a friend (*sakhā*),
> and other Ṛṣis watched over him like a son. (3)

131. On Gandhamādana, prominent in many *Mbh* episodes and in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, see Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*a*; it will also be the retreat of the last Arhat in the Tibetan *Candragarbha Sūtra* (chapter 7 § B.3.b).

132. Its only other mention occurs as Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa pass over it—along with the Śaryāti Forest and the holy places of the Horse's Head and Ātharvaṇa (7.57.28)—on the way to asking Śiva for the Pāśupata weapon. The *Rāmāyaṇa* seems to have relocated Śataśṛṅga to the west, "where the Sindhu river meets the ocean" (4.41.12)!

133. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 412–13 (mentioning it in this category along with the *Rāma*- and *Sāvitrī-upākhyānas*). On *upākhyānas* in the *Mahābhārata*, see chapter 9 § B; Hiltebeitel 2005*a*.

Let us note these "hosts" (*saṅghas*) of Ṛṣis, whose likes we shall meet again in chapter 12. In their midst, Pāṇḍu was "intent upon going to heaven by his own power (*svargaṃ gantuṃ parākrāntaḥ svena vīryeṇa*)" (2), and "after a long time he reached such stainless austerity that he became like a Brahma-Ṛṣi (*brahmarṣisadṛśaḥ*)" (4)—that is, he "looked like" or "resembled" one, yet did not become one, even if he seems to have momentarily convinced himself otherwise. For at this point, "wishing to cross to the other shore of heaven, heading north from Śataśṛṅga,[134] he set forth with his two wives" (5). His wishing to make this crossing, even with Kuntī and Mādrī, is motivated before this last verse by a fairly widely found eight-line mainly Southern interpolation.[135] Hearing from the Great Ṛṣis that they are starting out on a new moon-night's journey to visit Brahmā for a great gathering of the great-souled Gods, Ṛṣis, and Fathers, who are desirous of seeing the Self-Existent in Brahmaloka, Pāṇḍu suddenly gets up wishing to accompany them! The passage is cosmologically interesting for its new moon setting, its similarity to Buddhist instructions on the path to the company of Brahmā (see chapter 4 § A), and its suggestion that what motivates Pāṇḍu is to shortcircuit the system by joining the company of the heavenly Fathers before he is one. But it is clearly an interpolation, occurring throughout the Southern Recension, from which it seems to have entered all the Northern Devanāgari manuscripts but one, yet none of the others in the Northern Recension. It is another example of Southern ingenuity, and with or without it, the ascetics now tell Pāṇḍu enough is enough.

Without making it quite explicit, the ascetics describe the journey beyond Śataśṛṅga as reserved for immortals (as the interpolation spells out). And while saying nothing about Pāṇḍu's being childless, they state their concern for his wives:

> Going higher and higher facing northward up the king of mountains, we have seen the peak's many inaccessible regions. . . . There are regions of perpetual snow where no tree grows, no deer or birds live; there are some great continents (*kecin mahāvarṣā*), some inaccessible passes. No bird could cross them, much less animals. Only the wind has gone beyond, and the Siddhas, the Supreme Ṛṣis. Not deserving the misery, how could these two princesses not sink on this king of mountains? Don't go, Bharata bull! (111.5e–6b, 8–10)

134. Damayantī's three-day journey north from a hundred-peaked mountain before the Ṛṣis appear to her may echo this route.

135. *Mbh* 1.1171*. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 227; Ganguli [1884–96] 1970, 1: 267. This is similar to the one at the beginning of our skein where King Mahābhiṣa offends Brahmā by gazing at Gaṅgā. Note the interpolation there as well.

The ascetics are of course politely telling Pāṇḍu, without mentioning his deficiencies, that his wives are not ready to ascend bodily to heaven. But Pāṇḍu also understands (again, as the interpolation has hinted) that they are saying he also is not ready because he is childless (11). In a brief Southern interpolation, he continues to defy the system and would have all three of them take heaven by storm:

> By terrible *tapas*, together with my wives, my life abandoned, even without offspring, I will find heaven by terrible action (*karma*). (1.1177*)

But in the Critical Edition—in lines that the Southern Recension preponed when it transitioned from Gāndhārī's gestation to an earlier moment in Pāṇḍu's plight (see n. 122 above), leaving Pāṇḍu here with just these bold but hopeless words—it is a deflated Pāṇḍu who concedes his childlessness. He now admits that he has fulfilled three of his four debts: those to Gods, Ṛṣis, and Men, but not the one to his Fathers.[136] Troubled that his Fathers will perish when he does, he asks the ascetics how he might have "offspring in my field," meaning his wives (111.11–17). Surprisingly (at least, we would assume, to him), the ascetics are encouraging. By their divine eye (*divyacakṣuṣā*), they foresee him having "godlike, beautiful, flawless offspring" and urge him to apply his intellect and make the effort (18–20). Minimally, they must know that Kuntī has her boon. But note how they set Pāṇḍu up to think the solution could be at hand in some other way, perhaps with one of them—as if with a wink and a nod he should recall how he himself was conceived by the Brahmin Ṛṣi Vyāsa.[137] Indeed, before Pāṇḍu speaks to Kuntī, the Southern Recension now has him bring both his wives near to explain how

> lower persons in distress (*āpadi*) desire a son from the higher, and the straight (*sādhavaḥ*) desire offspring, the fruit of *dharma*, from the best—(1.1181*, lines 3–4)[138]

136. Pāṇḍu improvises to combine the three debts and the five *mahāyajñas* (see chapter 5 § A), leaving out the offering to Bhūtas and introducing the novel note that one performs the offering or debt to men by noncruelty (*ānṛśaṃsyena mānavān*; 111.14d), which is what Kiṃdama said Pāṇḍu lacked when he shot a mating deer (109.18d), as Pāṇḍu soon remembers (111.26). On this virtue, see further chapter 9.

137. Dhand 2004, 41 misses that the ascetics foresee the outcome and must know Kuntī's boon, saying that these verses "propose the timely solution of *niyoga*." But yes, Pāṇḍu "seizes on" this implication "with enthusiasm."

138. The Southern Recension, both flat and arch here, cribs the gist of these lines from what Pāṇḍu soon tells Kuntī at 111.30c–31b.

whereupon, as "he thought about a qualified (*guṇavantam*) Brahmin, the *dharma*-knowing" Pāṇḍu "brought" Kuntī and Mādrī "right near a conclave of great Brahmins" (lines 5–6)! The Critical Edition (including the Southern Recension when it returns from this interpolation) allows Pāṇḍu to be a little (if not much) more subtle as he has his conversation with "his famous *dharmapatnī* Kuntī in private (*vijane*)" or off to the side (111.22ab).

So now we come to the point of having tracked the term *niyoga* and its verbal variations through so many vicissitudes. If other women have been appointed or involved in appointing themselves or other women to this or that contribution to the continuity of the Kuru line, none since Satyavatī got to voice an opinion on the practice of *niyoga* itself, not to mention its variations, overtones, and ramifications. That is saved for Kuntī, now a woman who knows to speak her mind on *dharma*, but one who also knew to do so when she was just a "free female" girl.[139] Arti Dhand has done a good job bringing out the main import in Pāṇḍu and Kuntī's *niyoga* dialogue (2004, 40–43), but there are still things yet to notice. As Dhand says, usefully summarizing, "Pāṇḍu goes to some contrivance to convince Kuntī that what he is proposing is a meritorious act," first "telling her about the six types of heirs that are possible," then quoting Manu "that any child of hers would legally be considered a child of his," before he finally, "to fully legitimize his proposal," offers her precedent by a story (41).

It is in their dialogue through stories and counterstories that the *dharma* issues come alive, and Pāṇḍu's opener can justly be called a Lulu:

> Listen, Kuntī, to this story (*kathā*) about Śāradaṇḍāyanī, that hero's wife who was appointed (*niyuktā*) by the elders to bear a child. Pious and bathed, at night, Kuntī, at a crossroads, having chosen an accomplished Brahmin with a flower, having offered into Fire in the rite to conceive a son, she lived with him when that rite was finished. She gave birth to three warlike sons, Durjaya and so on, and so you too, beautiful wife, must by my appointment (*niyogāt*) quickly rise to conceive a son from a Brahmin of superior austerities. (111.33–36)

In the name of *niyoga*, Pāṇḍu is pressing Kuntī to do something similar to what the young unmarried daughter would do who is driven to perform the "husband-finding spell" of the "Three Ambikā Homa": she should go stand

139. In the fullest account of her impregnation by Sūrya, Kuntī asks him, "But how can I make a gift of myself that is surely not to be made?' . . . But if you think that this is *dharma*, best of burners, I will do your wish without being given away by relatives. Having made you the gift of myself (*ātmapradānam*), I shall remain virtuous (*satī*)" (3.291.5cd, 10–11ab).

at night at a crossroads seeking a way to get pregnant, and without parental or, it seems, spousal supervision! I do not press the matter of the crossroads being dangerous[140] only because the Śataśṛṅga ascetics all seem to be of the holiest sort. Kuntī has her chance to say something important, and what she starts off with is, in my opinion, one of the highlights of the *Mahābhārata*:

> On no account, *dharma*-knower, can you speak to me like this (*na mām arhasi dharmajña vaktum evaṃ kathaṃcana*), your devoted *dharma*-wife, O lotus-eyed one. (112.2)

As she makes up her mind whether and when to tell Pāṇḍu about her secret mantra, she is ready to stand her ground in a discussion that will turn on *dharma*, her affection for her husband, and her unreceptiveness to *niyoga*.

She is, to begin with, just as encouraging as the Hundred Peak Mountain ascetics:

> You yourself, strong-armed Bhārata hero, will give birth to heroic offspring in accord with *dharma*. I shall go to heaven with you, tiger among men. And for offspring, you only come to me, joy of the Kurus! Surely I will not go even in my mind to any man but you. (112.3–5b)

He *has* come to her, but not on terms she can yet accept. We see that she holds back yet promises all. Kuntī, as Dhand says, is "quite as deft in debate as Pāṇḍu himself," and she now cites a counterstory to match his (2004, 41). She calls her story (*kathā*) "purāṇic" (112.6ab, cf. 13b), and it is more ludicrous than his. As Dhand states briefly, "Bhadrā Kākṣavatī, . . . deeply aggrieved at the death of her husband, through fantastic resolve succeeds in having her husband return periodically to life to sire seven worthy sons on her" (41). Minimally, Kuntī tells a story of successful necrophilia. But in the last verse 34, she does not, as Dhand states, propose a "similar code of conduct for herself"; rather, if she sets anyone's course by this story, it is Pāṇḍu's, who, she explains, need not periodically rise from the dead:

> And so you too, Bharata bull, are able with just your mind (*eva manasā*) to beget sons on me by the lasting yoga-power of your *tapas*. (112.34)

She is really saying that Pāṇḍu will be able to contribute mentally to the use of her mantra, but that still lies beyond his grasp. But he does grasp, even as he is

140. See 5.37.26, where, Vidura tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra: "A sensible man will never feel free to enter a stranger's house at the wrong hour, nor stand at night concealed at a crossroads, nor solicit a woman of baronial rank."

about to tell the next counterstory, that her lesson has been about the resuscitated husband and would somehow have to be for him:

> Yes, so did (*cakāra*) Vyuṣitāśva of old, beautiful Kuntī, just as you have told. He was surely like an immortal (*sa hyāsīd amaropamaḥ*). (113.2)

I believe that necrophilia is a key to Kuntī's story, but that it is not only about a king who impregnates his queen from his corpse (112.29–33). Kuntī, I will now contend, answers Pāṇḍu with reminders of the circumstances of his own conception, and of dimensions of it that had less to do with *niyoga*, which she is refusing, than with its having been a cryptic and, at least to the "two *mahiṣīs*," repulsive Aśvamedha. If so, all this would help to explain how Kuntī's answer to Pāṇḍu is a rejection of his explicit mention of *niyoga* without her ever mentioning it herself. Here are the clues to such a reading.

Like Vicitravīrya with his two wives, King Vyuṣitāśva died of the extremely rare (in the epic) disease of "consumption" (*yakṣmāṇam*)[141] after lusting madly (*kāmasammataḥ*) for Bhadrā (112.16). Also like Vicitravīrya, Vyuṣitāśva dies sonless. But unlike Vicitravīrya, this "most Law-minded" and "*dharma*-spirited" scion of the Pūru line (this would make him one of Pāṇḍu's ancestors) made his fame as a *yajamāna* or sacrificer (8) in numerous Soma sacrifices (9, 14). And the big event of his reign, by which he subdued the kings in each direction (11), was a horse sacrifice, which Kuntī sonorously links with his name and with his reputation for extraordinary strength:

> At his Aśvamedha great-sacrifice, Vyuṣitāśva the majestic (*aśvamedhe mahāyajñe vyuṣitāśvaḥ pratāpavān*) surely became Indra among kings, endowed with the strength of ten elephants. (12)

The rite even occasions a song telling that he protected all the social classes like a father his sons (13)—perhaps a reminder that he probably had none. But we only know for sure that he was sonless with Bhadrā, who may or may not have been—but probably was—his *mahiṣī*. When he dies Bhadrā is not only his grieving wife (*bhāryā*; 112.17d); lamenting his demise and wanting to join him in the other world, she says, "Faithful as a shadow, king, I shall ever do your will, always loving to please you (*nityam priyahite ratā*)" (23). A *mahiṣī* is formulaically "dear" (*priya*) to her royal husband.[142] When his corpse

141. The epics use it only for Vyuṣitāśva and Vicitravīrya (1.96.57d; 5.145.23f)—with the same verb *samapadyata*.

142. Draupadī is the "dear" *mahiṣī* of Yudhiṣṭhira (*Mbh* 4.15.31, 16.12; 10.11.17) and of all five Pāṇḍavas (4.20.19, 5.80.22); so is Sītā to Rāma (*Rām* 4.48.18, 5.12.43–44, 13.46; *Mbh* 4.20.10 according to Draupadī); Śakuntalā finally to Duṣyanta (1.69.43); Indrāṇī to Indra (5.11.13; 12.22, while coveted by Nahuṣa); and Tārā *was* dear to Vālin according to their son Aṅgada (*Rām* 4.54.3). Both Draupadī (*Mbh* 4.19.10; 20.10, 19; 5.80.9) and Sītā (*Rām* 6.38.3) speak of the title with pride, and Vālmīkī uses it even when he welcomes the banished Sītā to his ashram (7.48.8).

impregnates her she is also a *pativratā* (32b). In any case, while there are no details on the rite, his name with *-aśva* means "the Daybreak Horse," and possibly also "the One Who is Possessed by the Horse."[143] The first meaning clearly resonates with his story when Kuntī identifies him with a rising sun before his Aśvamedha (10) and with a setting one after it (17b), dying of lust-driven consumption from his lovemaking with Bhadrā, during which, if she was his *mahiṣī*, they would have been making up for a year's lost time after her cohabitation with the horse (recall that the king may utter the most erotic mantras to the *mahiṣī* while she is lying with the horse). The meaning "Daybreak Horse" would suffice to carry along an Aśvamedha innuendo, which calls only for something beside his "inner voice" (*vāk . . . antarhitā*) to arise from his corpse. But "possession" may also lie latent in the story since something beside or above the strength of ten elephants enables him to speak from his corpse and impregnate Bhadrā, who would already have had some familiarity with his Aśvamedha and its horse if she was his *mahiṣī*. A possession scenario may also be at play from her side, for before she "embraced the corpse" (*taṃ śavaṃ sampariṣvajya*) and heard its inner voice's directions on her timing and a bath (29–31), she uttered a long lament in which she vowed to lie from that day forward on a bed of *kuśa* grass "possessed (*āviṣṭā*) by sorrow and intent on seeing you (*tvaddarśanaparāyaṇā*)" (27). It thus seems that just as Pāṇḍu's story outrageously enjoins Kuntī to perform *niyoga* by recalling something similar to the "husband-finding spell" of the "Three Ambikā Homa," Kuntī's story replies in kind, and equally outrageously, by getting Pāṇḍu to consider some of the deeper elements of what *niyoga*—which Kuntī will have no part of—meant for his own mother Ambālikā and her older sister Ambikā. Kuntī thus answers not in the name of *niyoga* itself but in the name of its Aśvamedha reverberations, which, it now appears, Pāṇḍu's conception has only doubled within his own dynastic line. Yet the matter is curious. Vyuṣitāśva is omitted from the Pūru–Bhārata–Kuru line's genealogies (see Brodbeck 2009*a*, 24–27). Could Kuntī be a better chronicler than Vaiśaṃpāyana? Could she be making this up as genealogy by invention? Brodbeck mentions her story (2009*a*, 176), but is silent on this question.

Kuntī has in any case mastered the art of deflection. But Pāṇḍu, while admitting that Vyuṣitāśva "was surely like an immortal,"[144] still wants to return to the subject of *niyoga*, and takes a deep route back to it through the sources of Law. What he says Kuntī should now listen to is not precisely an old story but

143. See MW 1040–41. As a neuter noun, *vyuṣita*, "daybreak," derives from *vi*-2.√*vas*, "to shine forth" (from *vi-uṣ*, "to dawn"). But as an adjective from *vi*-5.√*vas*, "to abide, dwell, live," it can mean "inhabited by" in compounds.

144. 1.113.2 as cited. I see nothing to suggest that Pāṇḍu "dismisses Kuntī's narrative as naïve" (Dhand 2004, 42).

what he calls, in impressive Vedicizing tones, an "ancient Law (*dharmam . . . purāṇam*) seen (*dṛṣṭam*) by the *dharma*-knowing great-spirited Ṛṣis" (113.3; cf. 6ef) that was repealed by none other than that Upaniṣadic enfant terrible and "spoiled brat" Śvetaketu.[145] In former times women went around in the open (*anavṛtāḥ*), were free (*svatantrāḥ*), and took pleasure as it pleased them, but all that ended after young Śvetaketu, outraged at seeing a Brahmin making off with his mother, heard his father, the great Ṛṣi Uddālaka, defend the law: "This is eternal *dharma*" (*eṣa dharmaḥ sanātanaḥ*; 13d)! Śvetaketu did not concur, and laid down a new rule or limit (*maryādā*) that, once past the main point and its obverse, comes to a rider that is suspiciously convenient to Pāṇḍu's current cause. Śvetaketu ruled that women's faithlessness to a husband will from now on be a grievous sin of aborticide (or brahmanicide), as will seducing someone else's chaste wife, and that "a wife who is appointed (*niyuktā*) by her husband to conceive a child and refuses shall incur the same evil!" (Dhand calls this last point "a somewhat sinister twist" [2004, 41].) Although Pāṇḍu is a Kṣatriya, he is quoting a Brahmin—Śvetaketu—for whom *bhrūṇahatyā* (1.113.17), "killing an embryo," can mean Brahmanicide as well.[146] Brahmanical *dharma* texts are written from a Brahmin's viewpoint, and any interference to a Brahmin's seed is a murder of Brahmins. Pāṇḍu thinks Kuntī should understand her rejection of *niyoga* as a Brahmanicide because she won't perform it with a Brahmin! The account is interesting for its way of imputing change to *dharma* while abrogating even the "eternal *dharma*." But Pāṇḍu is clearly less interested in legislative history than in suggesting that Kuntī is acting like she thinks the old law still applies to her. And in this, even if Pāṇḍu may sound like he wants to raise the stakes by "speaking Law" rather than just a story, and however convenient, and I think desperate, his argument now sounds, he has deepened the dialogue with an ironic glimmer of insight into his wife, who, ever since she was a "free" girl, has kept the secret of a mantra given her by a Ṛṣi "whose design in *dharma* was [as she knows] hidden"—a secret that the Ṛṣis of Mount Śataśṛṅga are now protecting along with her.

Indeed, imagine what Kuntī heard when Pāṇḍu began this narrative about ancient and eternal Law: "From youth on they were faithless to their husbands, but yet not lawless, for such was the Law in the olden days" (113.5). Kuntī will still keep *that* secret: that she was faithless to Pāṇḍu, her future husband, when she became a child-mother.

145. See chapter 4, n. 51; Olivelle 2005*b*, 13–51. Olivelle does not discuss this *Mbh* story (which makes his "spoiled brat" additionally into a mommy's boy) in that piece, but does in connection with *Manu*'s injunction (*M* 9.5–12) that women should be guarded (2005*b*, 257 and n. 32)—though mistaking the free partnering of Śvetaketu's mother for the rape of his wife. See now Black 2011, 137, 146–47.

146. See Olivelle 1999, 363, n. to *Ā* 1.19.15; Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 695, n. 50 to *Mbh* 12.15.55.

The point about this secret that is now emerging, and the point of giving Pāṇḍu and Kuntī such a mutually probing exchange, is that she *is still free* to do with her mantra what she will, and to that extent at least, the ancient Ṛṣis' eternal *dharma* that women are *svatantra* lives on in her.[147] Once the *kanyā* who could "desire all," she is now the woman who will tell her sons—speaking about another *kanyā*, Draupadī—to "share it all equally" and have it all turn out *dharma*, as it will now if Pāṇḍu will only calm down.

Pāṇḍu is not finished, but with this legal tale he seems to have run out of good ideas. He cites two more brief precedents including his own (113.21–23); and he makes a few more strident statements about *dharma* to continue pressing "the entire patriarchal establishment of ancient India into the service of his argument, alternately cajoling and bullying Kuntī" (Dhand 2004, 41). Finally, when he says,

> *Dharma*-knowers also know, princess, that whatever a husband tells his wife, whether *dharma* or even *adharma*, that is to be done—(27)

he might seem to have pushed matters beyond the limit. But that is also his segue to saying a wife should "especially" do her husband's bidding if he is longing for sons and without the power to engender them,

> as I am, flawless Kuntī, longing to set eyes on a son. Thus with folded hands, cupped like lotus petals with red fingers, this *añjali* is raised, lovely one, to my head for the sake of your grace (*prasādārtham*). (113. 28cd–29)

With his hands still, we may assume, so beseeching, he asks one last time that she go "by my appointment" (*man-niyogāt*) to a highly qualified Brahmin so that "on your doing, broad-hipped lady, I may go the way of those who have sons" (30). As Dhand says, it is this "truly extraordinary gesture, the parallel of which is hardly to be found in any of the Indian epics," and Pāṇḍu's "finally actually pleading" (2004, 42)—and, we might add, his finally acknowledging that it is totally up to her—that convinces Kuntī to reveal the secret of her mantra.

For the rest, we can limit ourselves, while keeping in mind the women's rivalries and the question of succession, to three points: the mantra; some different features in the conceptions and births of Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna; and the initiative of the Ṛṣis in settling the Pāṇḍavas and Kuntī at Hāstinapura.

147. To be sure, she is a special case: "Kuntī was fortunate: unlike Ambikā and Ambālikā, she had a magical formula. . . . Ordinary women did not possess special mantras to call on beautiful, well-scented, well-behaved gods" (Dhand 2004, 42–43).

One first hears about the mantra in the *Mahābhārata*'s prologue, where one verse describes the conceptions of all five brothers:

> Their two mothers were impregnated, in accordance with a secret Law (*dharma-upaniṣadam*), from Dharma, the Wind God, Śakra, and the twin Gods the Aśvins. (1.1.69)

"Secret law"—van Buitenen's translation—seems to call upon the esoteric character of the Upaniṣads. *Upaniṣad* can mean a secret teaching or spell, but it is in any case something "Vedic" and would have the authority of the Vedic Ṛṣis—like Pāṇḍu's "ancient law" endorsed by the Upaniṣadic sage Uddālaka—even if Kuntī gets her mantra only from Durvāsas and not his alter ego Vedavyāsa. A *dharma-upaniṣad*, however, is something new,[148] for which "secret law" or perhaps "legal spell" may have to do while keeping such Vedic overtones in mind.[149] As we have seen, Durvāsas gave this mantra to Kuntī as "one whose design in *dharma* is hidden (*nigūḍhaniścayaṃ dharme*)" (1.104.5a), a phrase (or verbal formula) that Kuntī knows well enough to repeat it exactly now to Pāṇḍu (113.33a). She also repeats that the mantra is "accompanied by sorcery" (*abhicārasaṃyuktam*; 34a), and further calls it a *mantragrāmam* (34c) or "canon of spells." When that term is used in the longer version of Karṇa's birth, it is said to be something "heard in the *Atharvaśiras*" (*atharvaśirasi śrutam*; 3.289.20).[150] Its hidden *dharma* is thus not only Upaniṣadic but Atharvanic, and sorcerous in that connection.

Yet we could not find much of sorcery in Kuntī's first tryout of the mantra with Suryā. *Abhicāra* comes explicitly into question only in the conception of Yudhiṣṭhira, and at Pāṇḍu's insistence. Making his mind up immediately, Pāṇḍu tells Kuntī, "Right now call Dharma" (39), and after explaining his choice, concludes, "With service and sorcery (*upacāra-abhicārābhyām*) propitiate Dharma" (42cd). Why the link between urgency and sorcery? For all his talk about Fathers, Pāṇḍu also wants a son quickly who will be in line for the throne:

> Call Dharma, lovely woman, for he among the gods partakes of merit (*puṇyabhāk*). For Dharma could not join yoke with us if it were *adharma* and people will now think that this is the Law (*dharmo ayam*). And of a certainty this son shall become the standard of Law (*dhārmikaḥ*) for the Kurus. (39c–41b)

148. It occurs only here. See Scheuer 1982, 74–75 with discussion and bibliography, notably Katre 1943, 122, who, drawing on the commentaries of Nīlakaṇṭha and Devabodha, says that "Dharma stands for Āpaddharma and *upaniṣad* for *mantragrāma*," and takes *mantra-upaniṣad* as a parallel, which he translates as "secret mantra."

149. To conceive Yudhiṣṭhira from Dharma, Kuntī "muttered what was to be muttered according to rule (*jajāpa japyaṃ vidhivat*)" (114.2cd), thus intoning it as a softly muttered Vedic prayer (*japa*).

150. For other usages, see 1.53.4; 3.290.1 and 2 (also in the account of Karṇa's birth); cf. *Rām* 1.21.10c; 1.26.21d.

If succession will hinge on this son's legitimacy, Dharma is the best he can do. As Kuntī now invokes Dharma, Vaiśaṃpāyana interjects that Gāndhārī has already been pregnant for a year (114.1); and soon enough (that is, before the birth of Duryodhana), Dharma's son is born to a brief announcement from a disembodied voice that this "firstborn son of Pāṇḍu called Yudhiṣṭhira" will be "the best of *dharma's* upholders" (5–6). Arjuna's conception and birth are quite different. Following another update that Bhīma was born on the same day as Duryodhana (114.14cd)—which would suggest that Gāndhārī's pregnancy lasted a *long* two years—the race is over and the couple can take their time for a son from Indra who will be Pāṇḍu's "choicest" (18). "Having consulted with the Great Ṛṣis," Pāṇḍu "directed Kuntī to do an auspicious yearlong vow" (19cd)—exactly what Ambikā and Ambālikā did not have time for (cf. Brodbeck 2009*a*, 183)—and undertakes his own arduous *tapas*, until, after a long time, Indra announces his compliance (20–22) and foretells the grandeurs of his son-to-be, as does the disembodied voice, now that of the wind in space (*vāyur ākāśe*), once Arjuna is born (23–36). This divine wind is heard not only by Pāṇḍu and Kuntī but by the Hundred Peak Mountain ascetics, filling them with joy, and setting off such a vast clamorous celebration of the Gods, Divine Ṛṣis—a *triṣṭubh* verse is set off for the Seven Maharṣis of the Big Dipper (41)—and all manner of other celestials and even infernals (the snake sons of Kadrū appear along with the bird sons of Vinatā; 40a, 60–62) that those "best of Munis" (63b), who by now seem to include both the Hundred Peak ascetics and the celestial Ṛṣis, are astounded and all the more exultant over the Pāṇḍavas (37–63).

Pāṇḍu, however, is greedy for even more sons, and when Kuntī demurs, Vaiśaṃpāyana gives one last update that Gāndhārī has also now had her numerous sons (1.115.1b). Mādrī now coaxes Pāṇḍu to see if Kuntī will give her a chance with the mantra (1.115.1–18), thus activating the latent rivalry between these two that plays out from this point on.[151] Kuntī's demurral comes with an interesting *dharma* adage, and she is surprised that Pāṇḍu is not respecting it:

> They do not speak of a fourth son even in a time of distress. After three she would be a loose woman,[152] after four a whore. Knowing this Law, which stands to reason (*buddhigaṃyam*), how do you transgress it and, as though besottedly, speak about offspring! (114.65c–66)

151. See 1.115.23, where Kuntī refuses Pāṇḍu's request to let Mādrī have another use of her mantra: "I said to her,' For this once,' and she got two! I was deceived. I fear that she will best me. That is the way with women!"

152. *Paraṃcāriṇī*, one who would now have a reputation for "moving with others."

Kuntī cites three sons as a *dharma* limit that she has already stretched. *Manu* makes one son the limit for *niyoga*, but allows that some say two (*M* 9.60–61). But we know that Kuntī now *has* four sons, counting her secret son Karṇa by Sūrya, and moreover that she has now had five "men," counting Pāṇḍu. This will be the number of Draupadī's husbands when Karṇa uses the same term for "whore" (*bandhakī*) to revile her at the dice match for "submitting to many men" (*Mbh* 2.61.35). Again, Kuntī knows the Law, threads her way carefully, and is as free with her mantra to stop as she was to start.

H. Settling Mother Kuntī and Her Sons Back at Hāstinapura

Now that all the children are in place, the Pāṇḍava boys and their parents have a little time with the Śataśṛṅga ascetics. If Pāṇḍu and his wives hiked to Śataśṛṅga, they might have considered making the return trip, even if they would have been slowed down by the children. They did not. Maybe Pāṇḍu was embarrassed about his curse, or knew his story would be hard to explain. The journey to the plains is shrouded in mystery, and some have seized upon this to infer that the Pāṇḍavas are "inventions," while others have made them out to be impostors, possibly Himalayan tribals from a polyandrous culture, and in any case not really the sons of Pāṇḍu, which is of course perfectly true. Compounding the mystery is the conundrum that Mādrī and Pāṇḍu seem to be cremated twice: first in the mountains and then outside Hāstinapura. I would just say that I do not think there is an ethnographic key to the Pāṇḍavas' origins or their polyandry, but it would be nice to know more about royal funerals of the time or times of the epic's composition. The point we must satisfy ourselves with is that the *Mahābhārata* refers all these problems to the Śataśṛṅga ascetics.

These characters now reenter the narrative immediately after the births of Mādrī's twins:

> Then those who dwelt on Śataśṛṅga gave [the five] their names, with devotion (*bhakti*) and ritual and benedictions, O king. . . . And as they grew up there on the holy Himalayan mountain, they brought wonder to the Great Ṛṣis who had foregathered there. (1.115.19, 27)

From here on, although both are repeatedly mentioned, the resident mountain-dwelling ascetics and the celestial Great Ṛṣis have merged and cannot be kept distinct. Love now springs its last time in Pāṇḍu's heart (116.4) as he succumbs to the "law of copulation" (*maithunadharma*; 9c) according to the "law of time"

(*kāladharma*; 12c), and Mādrī is the last to see desire on his face. As we saw in chapter 4, Pāli texts associate the powerful "law of sex" with village law and building houses to conceal it. The *Mahābhārata* now associates it with "law of time!"[153] Kuntī and Mādrī, rivals nearly to the end, grieve and scream before working out which of them will lie with Pāṇḍu on the pyre and which one will take care of the children (13–31). Their last eloquent, noble, and sad exchange gives Mādrī the last word:

> As he was lying with me the best of Bhāratas was cheated of his love. So how should I deprive him of his love in Yama's seat? Nor will I go on living treating your children the same as mine, noble lady, for evil would touch me that way! Therefore you, Kuntī, must treat my twins as your own sons. The king went to his death making love to me—let this carcass of mine be burnt with the body of the king that covers mine so well. Do this as a favor, noble lady! Watch over our children and think kindly of me—there is nothing else I could charge you with. (116.26–30b)

They do not mention (and must not know) that Mādrī's lot of joining Pāṇḍu in death was foreseen in Pāṇḍu's curse. It can be noticed that whereas the Kaurava–Pāṇḍava men's rivalries can be resolved only in heaven, their wives' differences can be resolved on earth.

And now the text is where it wants to be, with the Great Ṛṣis and the ascetics of Śataśṛṅga helpmates together in securing the "work of the gods" and the "welfare of the world":

> After they performed Pāṇḍu's final bath, the god-like Great Ṛṣis then took counsel, those ascetics having assembled. (117.1)

Although it is hard to tell with the honorifics, it seems like the Great Ṛṣis are addressing the ascetics:

> King Pāṇḍu has left his barely born children and wives[154] in trust with your worships (*bhavatām*) here as he went to heaven. (117.3)

In any case,

> Having thus taken counsel with one-another, those delighters in the welfare of all beings (*sarvabhūtahiteratāḥ*) put Pāṇḍu's children

153. See chapters 4 § C.1, n. 151; C.3.a and 6 § B on *Mbh* 12.200.35–37, where *maithunadharma* begins in the Dvapāra *yuga*.

154. *Dārān*, masculine plural, means both wives here and below, although only Kuntī is now alive.

> before them and set off to the Elephant City. And the lofty minded Siddhas set their minds on journeying there to give the Pāṇḍavas to Bhīṣma and Dhṛtaraṣṭra. At that very instant, having taken them, all the ascetics set out with Pāṇḍu's wives, sons, and body. (117.4–6)

The arrival of thousands of Cāraṇas and Munis astonishes the people of the capital, and as the sun rises throngs of men and women from all four social classes come to see the ascetics, showing no trace of jealousy and becoming minded of *dharma* (*dharmabuddhayaḥ*; 12d), while members of the royal household, including Bhīṣma, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Vidura, Satyavatī, Kausalyā (presumably Ambālikā), Gāndhārī, and Duryodhana and all his brothers come out to greet "all those hosts of Great Ṛṣis (*maharṣigaṇān*) with bowed heads." Bhīṣma then, once "the mass of people all around had fallen silent, offered kingship and the kingdom to the Great Ṛṣis" (8–18)—a pro forma gesture that *Mahābhārata* kings often make to such visitors that requires no reply but acknowledges their higher authority (i.e., "real" rule).

> Then the oldest of them, a Great Ṛṣi wearing the braid and deerskin, arose and knowing the Great Ṛṣis' mind (*maharṣimatam*) spoke. (117.19)

Accountable for the collective "mind of the Maharṣis," this unnamed senior Maharṣi[155] now makes a fairly lengthy (117.20–31) speech, telling how Pāṇḍu arrived at Śataśṛṅga "having renounced love and pleasure," how the Pāṇḍavas were born despite that, how Pāṇḍu enjoyed his sons' childhood and never strayed from the path of the good until he went to the world of the Fathers seventeen days ago, and how Mādrī joined him on the pyre faithful to the world of her husband. This senior Maharṣi speaks on three practical matters. First, saying "these are their two bodies," the Kauravas should see to the "remaining rites" for Pāṇḍu and Mādrī (29–30). Second, while not quite saying it, he strongly hints that the preferred heir should come through Pāṇḍu:

> This ancestral lineage was again uplifted by Pāṇḍu while the famous one dwelt in the forest always abiding by *dharma*. . . . And when the rite for the departed has been done, let famous Pāṇḍu, who knew every *dharma*, the bearer of the dynasty of the Kurus, receive the ancestral offering. (25, 31)

155. One is reminded of Śaunaka, "the *Mahābhārata*'s anchorman" (see chapter 6 n. 29). Also, if the compound *maharṣimatam* is read as "the great Ṛṣi's mind," one could take it as echoing passages that call the *Mahābhārata* Vyāsa's "thought entire (*kṛtsnaṃ matam*)" (1.1.23; 55.2; Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 12; cf. 54), in which case this Ṛṣi who might remind us of Śaunaka could be cryptically tuned into the thought of the author.

Finally and accordingly, when it comes to describing the births of the Pāṇḍavas, it is Pāṇḍu's firstborn who really counts:

> While he [Pāṇḍu] himself lived keeping a vow of celibacy, by divine instrument (*divyena hetunā*) this son Yudhiṣṭhira was born to him, begotten by Dharma himself. (21)

Enough said, and really, who would believe anyone else![156] I believe this is the first inkling of the divine plan made public in the course of the story, and it is the Ṛṣis' role to make it so. And with that, as they did after imparting their message to Damayantī,

> even as the Kurus were looking the Cāraṇas and Secret Ones (Guhyakas) all disappeared that instant. And upon seeing the host of Ṛṣis and Siddhas (*ṛṣisiddhagaṇa*) vanish there like a castle in the sky,[157] they attained the highest wonder. (33–34)

It helps, however, to have Vidura—who incarnates the same god Dharma—there to be the first to speak, ordering that the rite for the departed be properly begun and confirming, while somewhat understating the matter, that Pāṇḍu's "five heroic sons were born like sons of Gods (*surasutopamāḥ*)" (118.4c).

When this ceremony has settled Pāṇḍu and Mādrī among the line's honored forebears, Vyāsa then brings our skein to its end:

> When the *śrāddha* had been completed, Vyāsa looked upon the grieving people and said to his mother Satyavatī, who was blinded by pains of sorrow, "The times of happiness are past and times of trouble lie ahead. The days grow worse every new tomorrow. Earth's youth is gone. A dreadful time is at hand, confounded by much trickery (*māyā*), beset by many vices, when all conduct and acts of *dharma* shall be soiled. Go now, leave it all. Yoke yourself and live in the wilderness of austerities, lest you must witness the ruination of this your own family." (118.5–8)

Satyavatī consents, tells Ambikā she has heard that her son's "bad policy" will bring about the destruction of the Bhāratas, and Ambikā consents to leave as well. Bidding adieu to Bhīṣma, Satyavatī and Ambikā then set off with Ambālikā,

156. The short account of this scene in the epic's prologue has the Ṛṣis speak together, before disappearing, telling only that the boys are the sons of Pāṇḍu. But after this, "Some said, 'They are not his.' Others, 'They are his.' Others again, 'How can they be his when Pāṇḍu has been dead long since?'" But all agreed, "They must be bid welcome!" (*Mbh* 1.1.72–74). See Brodbeck 2009*a*, 172, 175.

157. Van Buitenen 1973, 262 for *gandharvanagara*, "a city of the Gandharvas," the heavenly musicians.

who is still distraught over the death of Pāṇḍu, for the forest. There, after the fiercest austerities, their lives end (9–12). Kuntī and Gāndhārī are now the line's only living mothers.

I. Conclusions

Looking back over this chapter, we see that *dharma* is spun out from all variety of Brahmanical sources: regional and family customs, anecdotes and proverbs, Veda—especially in relaying it through the great Vedic Ṛṣis, and in some sense what is pleasing to the self as regards both men and women. As we have suggested, it may be that the *Mahābhārata* picks up on an implication of the *dharmasūtras*, which, like our skein, use the enigmatic term *dharmatantra*, "loom of *dharma*." But unlike the *dharmasūtras*, this skein presents women who take initiative in the threading and are indispensable to the texture. They are back-clothed by female prototypes like the weavers of night and day and the snake and bird mothers Kadrū and Vinatā. Great things could also be said individually about other women's interventions in briefer crises of the Paurava–Bhārata–Kuru line (Devayānī and Śarmiṣṭhā, the two rivaling wives of Yayatī; Śakuntalā; Tapatī[158]) or about princesses married into other lines (Damayantī, Sītā, Sāvitrī) whom the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī hear about in the forest. But nowhere else in either epic is there a skein that gives women such repeated prominence not only in the succession of their lives but in the ramifications of their lives for each other's lives, or does so with such recurring focus on a primordial Law of the Mother. Each of these women plays her part in this textualization of *dharma*, bringing home its nuances—whether in questioning it, interpreting it, raising questions by her silences, or even by a slip of the tongue. Though one sees it most artfully in Kuntī, each one, pace *Manu*, raises the question of her *svatantra*, "whether she is a child, a young woman, or an old lady."

158. On Śakuntalā, see Biardeau 1979; Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*d*. On Tapatī, note that Jamison 1996, 305 n. 98 remarks on how she "dutifully cites man's views on women's lack of independence" at *Mbh* 1.161.14.

9

Two *Dharma* Biographies? Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira

The question mark in the title of this chapter looks ahead to this book's last chapter. There, I will argue that the *Buddhacarita*, "The Adventure of the Buddha," offers the first known close and critical reading of the Sanskrit epics. Its poet Aśvaghoṣa, of the first or second century CE, was familiar with both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. When he portrays the Buddha-to-be as saying, "there is no such thing as a wrong time for *dharma*" (*BC* 6.21), both Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira would fail to realize this because they are caught up in the particulars of Brahmanical *dharma*. As we know, the Buddha discovers "the true *dharma*." Do characters in the Sanskrit epics learn or make discoveries about *dharma*? With this question we extend our inquiry into biography as a representation of living *dharma* over time. We have already noticed this dimension in the Aśokan edicts and in the Pāli suttas—among the latter, especially in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, and above all in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, which is in the *Dīgha Nikāya*.[1] We may now consider whether the two classics build on these precedents to imagine what dealing with *dharma* over time means for a leading epic hero.

This matter of precedent is, of course, not to be taken without anticipating disagreement. Some, for instance, have introduced the

1. See chapter 2 on Aśoka; chapter 4 n. 14 on Manné's discussion (1990, 79–81) of the "intimate biographical suttas" of the *MN* (n. 99). Manné seems to suggest that the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* may have "found its way into" the *DN* as an exception because it arouses interest to "inspire conversion," and contains "accounts of converts and supporters from many different areas of society" (79).

possibility that Yudhiṣṭhira's portrayal may owe something to Aśoka's, and I have suggested that Vālmīki's portrayal of Rāma takes inspiration from the *Mahābhārata*.[2] Obviously Aśvaghoṣa's portrayal of the Buddha builds from the Sūtra Piṭaka.

A. The Royal Life as Adventure

A preliminary picture of Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira's *dharma* biographies can be given in outline in relation to the similar ways their royal lives are structured through each epic's "archetypal" organization into "Books." For the sake of ongoing reference, I present a template shared by the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s seven Books with the eighteen Books of the *Mahābhārata* in their Critical Editions.[3]

> Book 1 introduces frame stories involving the composition and transmission of the poem, dynastic origins connected with Vedic names, and the youthful lives and marriages of the heroes. Rāma marries Sītā. Yudhiṣṭhira and his four brothers, the Pāṇḍavas, marry Draupadī.
>
> Each Book 2 then describes a pivotal "court intrigue" highlighting the truthfulness of the king. In Rāma's case, his truth is exalted in that he upholds not only his own truth but his father's, who had promised Rāma's stepmother to make their son Bharata, Rāma's junior, king instead of Rāma, and to send Rāma into exile. In Yudhiṣṭhira's case, his truth is questioned at the dice match with his cousins, the Kauravas, and left ambiguous when he leaves Draupadī's question—whether, if he wagered himself first, he had a right to bet her—unanswered.[4]
>
> Book 3 is in each case about a forest exile. The kings and their companions enter and exit the forests with monstrous encounters, and while they are there, they receive instructive guidance from great sages or Ṛṣis. After abduction attempts on their wives, in Sītā's case successful, the second monstrous encounters are transformative, ending their

2. It has been proposed that specific *Mahābhārata* characters are modeled after Aśoka: Yudhiṣṭhira according to Fitzgerald 2001, 2004*a*, 103, 114–23, 129, and Sutton 1997; Arjuna according to Selvanayagan 1992. For discussion see Hiltebeitel 2005*b*; Bowles 2007, 126–27; Das 2009, 243–46. Meanwhile, Hiltebeitel 1989 and Biardeau 2002 see the *Mahābhārata* as a riposte to Buddhism without such singular biographical modeling. For arguments implying that Vālmīki's portrayal of Rāma draws from the *Mahābhārata*, including the *Rāmopākyana*, see Hiltebeitel 2009*a*., and chapters 5 §§ C and D of this book.

3. As my first attempt to outline such a template indicated (2005*a*, 460–61), Pollock 1986, 38–42 and Biardeau 1997*a*, 77–119 anticipate such an approach through the first two Books.

4. On this episode, see Hiltebeitel, 2001*a*, 240–77; Das 2006, 99–133.

> forest trials so that they can return to society—in Rāma's case to a society of monkeys. Rāma encounters a headless monster who tells him to befriend the exiled monkey king Sugrīva to learn about Sītā's abduction. Yudhiṣṭhira meets up with his father Dharma disguised as a seemingly murderous Yakṣa, whose second of three boons, once Yudhiṣṭhira answers his questions, is that the five Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī will be able to pass their final thirteenth year of exile incognito in a place of their choosing. Note that the Buddha ends his forest life to return to society after his encounter with Māra, the devilish god of death.
>
> Book 4 is then about inversions. Rāma gets involved with the topsy turvy world of the monkeys' capital, in which the royal monkey brothers Vālin and Sugrīva play out a reverse image of Rāma's own story of exile, wife-abduction, and fraternal rivalry for the throne. The Pāṇḍavas assume topsy turvy disguises in the kingdom of Matsya, "Fish."
>
> Book 5 is then about "Efforts" made in Preparation for War: by both sides in the *Mahābhārata*; by all the monkeys in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (5.10.24; 33.36, using the *Mahābhārata*'s term for such efforts, *udyoga*). In each epic a divine messenger goes into the enemy camp where he reveals an overpowering nature while upstaging attempts to hold him captive. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* this messenger is Rāma's devoted monkey Hanumān; in the *Mahābhārata* it is Kṛṣṇa.
>
> Books 6 in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and 6–11 in the *Mahābhārata* are then War Books.
>
> And finally there are the denouements and returns to the frames in *Rāmāyaṇa* 7 and *Mahābhārata* 12–18. Here the two kings' *dharma* biographies are handled very differently. Once their main exploits are over, Rāma becomes the primary listener to his own adventure, whereas Yudhiṣṭhira goes on learning more and more about being a Dharma King, and is tested two last times by his father Dharma.

As the differences show, the *Rāmāyaṇa* works this common blueprint along most carefully through Books 1–5. I favor the priority of the *Mahābhārata* and present matters from that standpoint, with the corollaries that *Rāmāyaṇa* Books 1 and 7 are integral to its earliest design and that the *Rāmāyaṇa* poet is familiar with the *Mahābhārata*'s archetypal design and intent upon refining it.

In making such a comparison, one must also bear in mind that it is complicated by Yudhiṣṭhira's relation as the son of Dharma[5] to Kṛṣṇa, the avatar or

5. Yudhiṣṭhira's counterpart in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* as a son of Dharma is the monkey Suṣeṇa (6.21.22; 33.14), father of Vālin's wife Tārā, and a healer. The *Rāmopkhyāna* knows Suṣeṇa but not as the son of Dharma.

incarnation of the supreme deity Viṣṇu. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma is likewise Viṣṇu incarnate. That is one source of his perfection and truth, however unbeknownst it may be to him. Whereas Kṛṣṇa knows and indeed occasionally confirms his divinity, Rāma must consider himself human until he has killed Rāvaṇa because Rāvaṇa has a boon that he can be killed only by a man.[6] Indeed, uncomfortable though it has always been to modern readers, one of the implications of Rāma's not knowing that he is really divine until Brahmā tells him so twice is that Vālmīkī gives Rāma a split personality. His *dharma* biography as a human is ruptured at these two points, both of which occur after he has killed Rāvaṇa and submitted Sītā to ordeals because he or others doubted that she would have been chaste with Rāvaṇa. Even after Sītā leaves the world forever rather than submit to the second ordeal, Rāma's human life is depicted as going on without ostensible reflection on his divinity. Yudhiṣṭhira, on the other hand, must puzzle his way to truths in relation to a rather unusual father and an avatar whose advice is not only subtle but shady and often withheld from him, and who often, I dare say, simply cannot be believed.[7]

It would be possible to present both biographies in fuller narrative than space allows.[8] I will concentrate in this chapter on four points of comparison: the ways Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira are introduced in their epics' frames; their position in relation to substories; the monstrous encounters that bring their forest adventures to a close; and the ways they handle killing foes in the two scenes where the morality of their doing so comes most into question—Rāma's killing of the monkey king Vālin from ambush, and Yudhiṣṭhira's lie to enable the killing of the Brahmin Droṇa. A fuller treatment of Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira's *dharma* biographies would want to take up at least five wider areas in which they are delineated: their treatment of women, especially their wives; their filial obligations to parents and to others within their families; their instruction by the wise; their understanding and handling of royal obligations; and what they learn about it all by the end. This chapter will touch on some of these matters while opening others for further discussion in subsequent chapters.

6. See Pollock 1984, with support from Goldman 1995, 74, 80; Goldman and Sutherland Goldman 1996, 30; 2009, 1,445 (n. to 6.105.10). Pollock has demonstrated that Rāma's *seeming* humanity is a structural piece of the story threaded into the poem along with a boon obtained by Rāvaṇa from Brahmā: that of invulnerability to death from all different classes of beings other than humans, whom Rāvaṇa omitted because he disdained them (7.10.13–20). Rāma must thus be a man to slay Rāvaṇa and must *think* he is one until he accomplishes this goal. In agreement, see Hiltebeitel 2003. Ignoring such recent discussion, González-Reimann 2006*a* draws an increasingly tenuous distinction between textual and literary analysis (204) while making mostly literary points himself in a misfired attempt to reclaim an undivinized Rāma for "the general tone of the narrative" (213), and to paint Pollock as an unwitting Vaiṣṇava hermeneut.

7. For preliminaries on these *Mahābhārata* matters, see chapter 1 § C. For their further unfolding, see chapter 12.

8. For Yudhiṣṭhira, see Klaes 1975, especially 24, 29–30, 32–34, 43, 49, 112; Bose 1986.

B. Frames and Frontmatter on Rāma, Yudhiṣṭhira, and *Dharma*

In chapter 5 (§§ C and D), we noted some affinities between the use of frame stories in *Manu* and the two epics, and remarked on one way that *Manu* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* are closest to each other: their author-poets draw direct (uninterpolated) inspiration from Brahmā, denoting unmediated "Vedic" authority. We also noted a singularity of the *Rāmāyaṇa* frame. Whereas the *Mahābhārata's* and *Manu*'s frames are addressed only to remote, universal listeners who, in the *Mahābhārata*'s case, are several generations, if not galaxies, removed from Yudhiṣṭhira and other heroes whose lives are over, the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s first universal listener is none other than Rāma himself who will hear the epic, his own story, as the "perfect man." In its first four-chapter (*sarga*) *Upodghāta* or "Preamble," the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s frame presents two progressive unfoldings of the story—the first told by the Ṛṣi Nārada to the Ṛṣi and poet-to-be Vālmīki, the second envisioned by Vālmīki himself, now a poet—that trace their way into the third full unfolding of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* itself.[9]

The first unfolding comes in Nārada's response to Vālmīki's text-opening question—or overarching question—as to whether there is an ideal man in the world today:

> Is there a man in the world today who is truly virtuous (*guṇavān*) and energetic and yet knows both *dharma* and how to act upon it (*dharmajñaś ca kṛtajñaś ca*)? Who always speaks the truth and holds firmly to his vows? Who exemplifies proper conduct and is benevolent to all creatures? Who is learned, capable, and a pleasure to behold? Who is self-controlled, having subdued his anger? Who is both judicious and free from envy? Who, when his fury is aroused in battle, is feared even by the gods? This is what I want to hear, for my desire to know is very strong. Great Ṛṣi, you must know of such a man. (1.1.2–5)

The first verses pose the question in terms of paired *dharma* traits combined with their implementation.[10] From there on, Vālmīki asks after particular

9. For discussions of the *Upodghāta* from different perspectives, see Bhandare 1920, 1–43 and critical notes; Goldman 1984, 67–73, 273–88; Brockington 1998, 2–3, 380, 395. Some aspects of this treatment of the *Upodghāta* were discussed earlier in Hiltebeitel 2005*a*.

10. Goldman trans. (1984, 121), excepting this book's usual insertion of "*dharma*." But let us note that *kṛtajña* can quite ordinarily mean "grateful." Vālmīki's first doublet of a virtue and its implementation could thus be translated "who knows *dharma* and is grateful" rather than ". . . and how to act upon it." This would change the implications of Vālmīki's question in two ways: first, with respect to what it means to implement *dharma*, that is, why gratitude would implement *dharma* just as holding firm to vows would implement truth; and second, particularly with respect to Sītā, who will hold this quality of Rāma up to question, as we shall see in chapter 10 § D.

virtues, on the way to addressing the matter of how this person would handle anger. By the last verse, it is clearly a leading question, for Vālmīki certainly suspects or even knows that Nārada has an answer. The *Rāmāyaṇa* frame thus opens from this *dharma* question, and leaves the question open for a moment before Nārada replies.

Nārada meets the requirements of the question with an entirely laudatory brief account of Rāma's virtues and adult life, ostensibly to date (1.1.7–76). He responds as the question requires, first admitting that the "celebrated virtues" asked for are hard to find in one person, but that upon consideration, he has the answer: Rāma (7–8); and then reciting in detail the qualities Rāma possesses, including certain godlike ones (9–18) that might remind us that *Manu*'s king is born from the particles of various gods (*M* 7.5–7; see chapter 5 § E). Then he embarks upon Rāma's story (19–79). This section provides the so-called *Saṃkṣipta* ("condensed") *Rāmāyaṇa*, which, because it does not include anything from the first or last Books, has been taken to predate "even the oldest stratum" of Book 1 while postdating "the central body of narrative that is summarized in this section" (Goldman 2004, 68)—a rather acrobatic proposition that would require all the iterations of Rāma's story in the *Upodghāta* to reflect different stages in the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s textual formation (cf. Brockington 1998, 381). I propose, on the contrary, that Nārada's account is purposefully "condensed" for the further iterations to unfold from it in the mind of the poet (and, of course, the first listener, and other listeners and readers).

I will note only a few points of interest in Nārada's condensation. Saying the minimum about Rāma's killing of Vālin (49, 55), he hardly hints at anything problematic in Rāma's life and omits Sītā's fire ordeal while concluding with Rāma and Sītā's return to Ayodhyā to recover his kingdom (70). In bringing Rāma to mid-career, Nārada speaks of his rule as already a kind of golden age ("like the Kṛta Yuga," 73) extending into the future in which Rāma "is performing hundreds of horse sacrifices involving vast quantities of gold," "bringing about the establishment of royal lines of a hundred qualities, and appointing the four social classes each to its own *dharma* in this world (*cāturvarṇyaṃ ca loke 'smin sve sve dharme niyokṣyati*)"—again sounding like *Manu* (e.g., 7.35)—before he will go to heaven after ruling for eleven thousand years (74–76).[11] In mentioning the "hundreds of horse sacrifices" that spangle Rāma's ongoing future present, Nārada leaves

11. This comes right after the *Saṃkṣipta* section, and seems to refer to the statement made twice at the end of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* that Rāma ruled for ten thousand years (6.112.82, 90). But as the conclusion of one continuous iteration, it also implies Rāma's later years that are described in Book 7, where that figure is also mentioned (7.94.12; cf. 92.16: he spent ten thousand years seeing to state affairs).

unmentioned the one horse sacrifice narrated in Book 7, undoubtedly the first, where the banished Sītā refuses to return to Rāma and enters the earth.[12]

The *Rāmāyaṇa* frame thus opens onto a king who is still alive, about whom Vālmīki will be able to compose his *Rāmacarita/Rāmāyaṇa*[13] to help readers, and perhaps himself, decide whether Nārada has truly answered his question. The contrasts with the *Mahābhārata* are striking. Yudhiṣṭhira is also mentioned from time to time in the *Mahābhārata*'s frontmatter in ways that highlight associations with *dharma*. First, a two-verse allegory compares "Duryodhana made of wrath (*manyumayo*)" and "Yudhiṣṭhira made of *dharma* (*dharmamayo*)" as each a "great tree" with others on each side as the tree's crotch, branches, flowers, and roots (1.1.65–66).[14] And soon thereafter, Yudhiṣṭhira begins to be referred to frequently as Dharmarāja, the Dharma King:[15] first, as the story is initially digested in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's plaint as to all he should have done had he known better (1.1.108b, 113b, 148b; see E. Hudson 2007, 36–42), which is part of an *adhyāya*-long conspectus called the *Anukramaṇī*; and then again in the *Parvasaṃgraha* (2.62d, 175b, 196d, 217b, 228c), the epic's table of contents (1.2.33–233). But the *Mahābhārata*'s frontmatter and outer frames can hardly be said to open directly onto Yudhiṣṭhira, who is not made a focus of narrative until the Pāṇḍavas' great grandson Janamejaya asks his next-to-last opening question to launch the main narrator Vaiśaṃpāyana on his inner frame recitation of the great story of Janamejaya's deceased ancestors: "How could the best of *dharma*'s upholders, the son of Dharma, who knew *dharma*, endure such oppression, of which he was undeserving?" (1.56.9).[16] Yudhiṣṭhira's forte is asking questions[17]—something

12. The *Mahābhārata*'s *Rāmopākhyāna* also ends with the return to Ayodhyā (*Mbh* 3.275.66) before briefly mentioning some events that follow Rāma's enthronement, the last of which is curious: "Then, assisted by gods and Ṛṣis (*devarṣisahitaḥ*), he offered, along the bank of the River Gomatī, ten unimpeded horse sacrifices" (275.69). *Devarṣisahitaḥ*, which could be translated "together with the divine Ṛṣis" [one or many]), would leave the *Rāmāyaṇa* poet a place to insert himself (Vālmīki is unmentioned in the *Rāmopākhyāna*) among the Ṛṣis who might have come to one such Aśvamedha, but hardly a place for Sītā to have come there with him.

13. Nārada concludes with a *phalaśruti* that either counts his own description as a "*Rāmacarita*" and "*Rāmāyaṇa*" already, or, more likely, calls for a text by those names that is yet to be composed (1.1.77–79).

14. Here Dhṛtarāṣṭra is the Kaurava tree's root, and Kṛṣṇa, *brahman*, and Brahmins the Pāṇḍava tree's root. Cf. 7.157.22–24: "Kṛṣṇa is the root of the Pāṇḍus and Pārtha is like the risen trunk; the other Pārthas are branches, and the Pāñcālas like leaves. The Pāṇḍavas have Kṛṣṇa as refuge, Kṛṣṇa as strength, Kṛṣṇa as lord—Kṛṣṇa is their central support even as the moon among stars. Therefore, O Sūta's son, avoiding the branches and trunk, bring down Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇaṃ nikṛndhi*) who is always everywhere the Pāṇḍus' root." Dhṛtarāṣṭra has asked why a one-use sure-shot weapon was wasted on the Rākṣasa Ghaṭotkaca in the night fighting after the fourteenth day of battle after Saṃjaya has told him that every night Duryodhana, Śakuni, Duḥśāsana, and Saṃjaya had told Karṇa to kill Arjuna or else Kṛṣṇa with that special spear, See Hiltebeitel 2007, 35.

15. The *Rāmāyaṇa* also knows Yama as Dharmarāja (2.58.23d, 33c; 7.18.5, 23; 7.22.26), and even gives two prominent kings that title, Kaikeyī's father Aśvapati and Daśaratha (2.68.9; 75.6); but never, as is commonly thought, Rāma.

16. See Klaes 1975, 24 on this question and its pervasiveness in opening the narration of Yudhiṣṭhira's life.

17. Before Book 3, Yudhiṣṭhira is the first one with a ready answer when King Drupada doubts the *dharma* of his daughter's marriage to five men (Book 1), and it is Yudhiṣṭhira's *not* answering Draupadī's *dharma* question after he has wagered her in the dice match that drives Book 2.

more rarely seen in Rāma—rather than being the answer to one. Both texts, however, are ingenious in leaving these early *dharma* questions posed by and about their royal protagonists hanging in the air.

Once Nārada has taken leave for the sky (1.2.2), in the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s second *sarga*, Vālmīki witnesses near his āśrama the grieving cries of a female Krauñca bird over the slaying of her mate by a "cruel hunter." This "brought forth the compassion of that Ṛṣi who was the soul of *dharma*" and provoked him to say, "This is *adharma*" (*adharmo 'yam*), or as Goldman nicely renders it, "This is wrong!" (1984, 127). Vālmīki then breaks into the utterance that creates "verse" (and thus poetry) out of "grief" (*śloka* out of *śoka*; 1.2.9–17). Brahmā now appears (22–36) to claim that the inspired verse came from him, and to urge that Vālmīki should now compose in its entirety the adventure (*carita*) of the "*dharma*-souled, virtuous (*guṇavat*), wise, and steadfast Rāma" for the world to hear, "just as you heard it from Nārada" (30–31); and he gives Vālmīki the insight to see what he did not know and what is still yet to happen in Rāma's life, with his word that his poem will endure so long as the rivers and mountains last on earth and that it will all be true (33–35). Brahmā thus assures Vālmīki that he will know things left out in Nārada's encomium. Upon Brahmā's vanishing, Vālmīki now adopts the idea of composing "the entire *Rāmāyaṇa kāvya* in verses such as these" (1.2.40cd)—that is, such as the *śloka* he has just uttered.

With that, the third *sarga* tells how the righteous (*dharmātmā*) Vālmīki righteously (*dharmeṇa*)[18] enters into this story so exemplary of righteousness (*dharmasaṃhitam*) for the first time by a sort of meditative preview (1.3.1–2), to which a widely attested and well-known interpolation (1.154*) gives "additional details on the sage's vision," including a famous verse that says, "Then, deep in his yogic trance, that *dharma*-knower saw all that had taken place before him as clearly as an *āmalaka* fruit placed in one's hand" (lines 7–8; Goldman 1984, 283). Now Vālmīki offers a kind of first unfolding of what his poem will contain (3–28). Rāma will hear Viśvāmitra's "various other marvellous stories (*nānā citrāḥ kathāś canyāḥ*)" (4); he will square off with Rāma Jāmadagnya (5); and, as Nārada already indicated, he will meet Bharadvāja (8). Most important, while adding nothing problematic on Rāma's slaying of Vālin (15–16) and still without mentioning Sītā's fire ordeal, Vālmīki closes with Sītā's banishment (28), taking the story for the first time into Book 7.[19] We still remain in the narrative middle of Rāma's long life, but a bit further along and into it—and implicitly

18. Goldman 1984, 283 notes of this *dharmeṇa*: "The term is quite difficult here." He follows a commentarial reading that seems to seek a contextual meaning, translating it as "through profound meditation."

19. See Goldman 1984, 285: "Note that this is the only reference to events that occur in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*" (7.46). Yet see n. 11 above on Rāma's future.

into the question of the relation between Rāma's life and Vālmīki's, for when Sītā is banished, Rāma's brother Lakṣmaṇa takes her secretly—and she is pregnant—to Vālmīki's hermitage, where Rāma and Sītā's twins are born. Is this still yet to happen, or are Sītā and the twins already there? That Vālmīki's poetic inspiration was just before this triggered by his compassion for the painful cries of a female bird suggests at the very least a foreshadowing of Sītā's estrangement from Rāma, of which Vālmīki now has been given sure knowledge by Brahmā.

Then, looking back upon the poem's completion, the fourth *sarga*, concluding the *Upodghāta*, tells how Vālmīki taught the *dharma*-knowing princes Kuśa and Lava (4), Sītā's and Rāma's sons, the "unsurpassed tale exemplary of *dharma*" (11ab) that made "the *dharma*-loving Munis glad at heart" (15ab). Once it is implied that Vālmīki has now composed his poem, he calls "the whole *Rāmāyaṇa* poem (*kāvya*) the great adventure of Sītā (*sītāyāś caritam mahat*) and the slaying of Paulastya [Rāvaṇa]" (1.4.6), thereby suggesting that although Rāma's *carita* or adventure (2.30–31) has been his starting point, his complete poem is about Sītā's adventure, or these two adventures that are about to unfold as one: the "profound adventure" (*mahānubhāvaṃ caritam*) that Rāma prepares himself to hear at the end of the *Upodghāta* (4.26). For here, amid what I think are restrained hints at the setting[20] in which Vālmīki's poem will finally be recited (21–27), we have the captivating verse in which Rāma invites the two youths to begin singing it before him, its own hero: "Moreover, it is said that the profound adventure they tell is highly beneficial even for me. Listen to it" (1.4.26cd). We are not told who said this to Rāma, or whom he is addressing. But that would now include "we, the readers." We are thus invited to figure out how this story will be of benefit even for Rāma, which requires that we wait to learn more about the scene of this recital, which will take us further beyond Sītā's banishment into the seventh book. By this time, the point seems to be that Vālmīki's poem will be about how the perfection of Rāma could relate to the compassion and grief that Vālmīki has felt over the banishment of Sītā.

The *Rāmāyaṇa*'s frame is then picked up in Book 7, when Vālmīki says his first words within the story itself, welcoming the banished Sītā to his ashram with hints at the preamble when he tells her he knows everything by his "concentration on *dharma*" (*dharmasamādhi*), and above all that she is "without sin" (*apāpām*; 10a) and of "pure character" (*viśuddhabhāva*; 7.48.9–10). Kuśa and Lava then pick up from the preamble directly by singing their parents' "profound adventure" to their father in person during intervals of Rāma's horse

20. The Aśvamedha is not mentioned and Rāma is on a throne and amid an assembly (*pariṣad*). As Goldman indicates (1984, 288, notes to verses 13, 21, and 27), it is possible to take this as implying Rāma's court at Ayodhyā, but commentators and interpolations have set it at the Aśvamedha, which I think is probably implied.

sacrifice, where Vālmīki's dramatic entry presents the occasion to reveal, or better suggest, the poetic heart of the whole poem through its effects on its hero and its heroine (see Shulman 2001, 255–92).

Information on the *Mahābhārata*'s frame is also resumed with further revelations in Book 12, but, as I have indicated, the *Mahābhārata*'s frame narrations are generations removed and cosmologically remote from the central story. Nonetheless, in both epics there is a moment where the author emerges from the frames to speak directly to the epic's main listener. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, this occurs at this climactic moment when Vālmīki addresses Rāma and confirms Sītā's *dharma* before she enters the earth (7.87.15–88.10; Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 321). In the *Mahābhārata*, Vyāsa cannot, of course, address Yudhiṣṭhira in the frames, although he does so, as we shall see, on several occasions in the main story while Yudhiṣṭhira is alive. But there is one occasion where Vyāsa addresses Yudhiṣṭhira's successor Janamejaya directly in answer to a culminating question of the *Nārāyaṇīya*. This is where Vyāsa narrates the subtale of the Horse's Head (see chapters 6 § B, 8 § E). For Yudhiṣṭhira to hear this is, of course, incongruous. But why not? If Rāma can hear about his own future, Yudhiṣṭhira could hear about that of the first and future listener to the *Mahābhārata*.

These authorial frames thus have much to tell us about how the two epics position their poet-authors in relation to questions about their main heroes' *dharma*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* frame is shorter, more concentrated on the poet's relations first to the heroine and then to the hero, and more poetically accountable in allowing one to trace questions of *dharma* into the main narrative and the whole poem. It opens like a flower, petal by petal from a "perfect" bud. At no point in its unfolding does it include a retrospective digest like the *Mahābhārata*'s *Anukramaṇī* and *Parvasaṃgraha*. Its unfolding table of contents never widens to the whole poem, but only leads into it. In contrast, once the *Mahābhārata* opens a clearing on its two great trees of *dharma* and *adharma*, it soon surrounds them with the forest.

C. Sidestories and Subtales, Foregrounding and Legal Precedent

Both epics raise the matter of ancillary stories within their introductory material and frames, but in different ways—in each case, with important bearing on their differing treatments of *dharma*. We can approach these differences with an initial pair of hypotheses. First, regarding what the two epics have in common, in each epic, one can usefully differentiate early ancillary narratives that provide

background for the development of the central story from later ones that leading characters, now adults in the midst of life's complexities, hear (and sometimes tell) themselves for their own edification or entertainment. Second, regarding a point of difference, whereas the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s early ancillary stories are concerned to foreground the extraordinary dharmic character of Rāma that is emerging along with their telling, the *Mahābhārata*'s early ones are concerned with legal precedent in gray areas of *dharma* that these stories expose while arriving at legally binding solutions that will have their bearing on the more ambiguous world in which the chief characters are still yet to emerge.

The *Rāmāyaṇa*'s frame offers no complete table of contents, but in mentioning Viśvāmitra's "various other marvellous stories," it does not fail to indicate that it will include ancillary stories. According to Goldman, Viśvāmitra's stories "are not directly part of the *Rāmacaritam*, such as the episodes of the origin of the Ganges (1.34), the birth of Kumāra (1.36), the churning of the ocean (1.44), the penances of Diti (1.46), and so on"; he goes on to generalize that such tales are, "for the most part, recounted in the first and last books of the *Rāmāyaṇa*" (1984, 283).[21] Yet he stops short of mentioning that Viśvāmitra concludes his run with the story of the Ṛṣi Gautama and his wife Ahalyā (1.47–48), which engages Rāma directly when Rāma's presence redeems Ahalyā of Gautama's curse for her having slept with Indra—a cautionary tale about marriage and sexuality before Rāma's marriage to Sītā (Sutherland Goldman 2004, 72) that comes early within the sequence and involves one of the great Vedic Ṛṣis who will, in effect, oversee Rāma's career path.[22] Indeed it is also possible that Vālmikī counts the narratives that Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and King Janaka (Sītā's father) next hear from Gautama's eldest son Śatānanda (Janaka's domestic priest) under the rubric of Viśvāmitra's marvellous stories, since they are mainly *about* Viśvāmitra and include his rivalry with Vasiṣṭha, another of those great Vedic Ṛṣis who was also already very much part of Rāma's life.

Now a curious feature of this sequence of stories told by (1.22–24, 28, 31–48) and about (50–64) Viśvāmitra is the frequency with which the augmented form *dhārmik-* is used, sometimes even hyperaugmented by incremental prefixes like *su-*, "very"; *ati-*, "excessively"; *parama-*, "supremely"; and *bhṛśa-*, "severely." The Princeton *Rāmāyaṇa* translators do not nuance these terms much and tend to render them, like much else, simply as "righteous." But I believe van Buitenen has the right impulse when he translates *dhārmik-* as "law-abiding," which I have on occasion been adopting in the sense of one in

21. Cf. Brockington 1998, 382: "The entire Viśvāmitra episode (1.31–64) lacks direct relevance to the main story."

22. See Hiltebeitel 2009*a* and chapter 12.

whom *dharma* not only abides but does so intensively.[23] *Mahābhārata* usages are proportionally much fewer and more scattered. But in the *Rāmāyaṇa* we find them frontloaded in Book 1 mainly through the stories told by and about Viśvāmitra. These Book 1 stories groom young Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with tales about intensely law-abiding Vedic Ṛṣis who are peers of Viśvāmitra, while both Books 1 and 2 regale them further with references to intensely law-abiding kings in the Kauśika line of Viśvāmitra before he becomes a Brahmin; in the line of Janaka that Rāma will marry into; and of course in Rāma's own Ikṣvāku dynasty.[24] All these tales told by intensely law-abiding interlocutors about intensely law-abiding Ṛṣis and dynastic scions, all converging in Rāma's own solar line,[25] are, of course, precedent for Rāma's becoming intensely law-abiding in Book 2 up through his departure for the forest and his meeting there with Bharata.

Here are some of the more illustrative instances in Book 2, where Rāma has by now emerged as the exemplar of all this dharmic intensity. Daśaratha says to Kaikeyī,

> I am bound by *dharma*'s bond (*dharmabandhena baddho 'smi*). My mind is failing me! I want to see law-abiding Rāma, my beloved eldest son. (2.12.16)

23. Of van Buitenen's translations of the usage, see 1.5.7, 1.46.22, 1.57.51, 5.39.37, 5.88.34, and notably, from the sage hunter, 3.198.28: "If our king Janaka had a bad son who was a jailbird he would throw him in the dungeon; but he does not bother a law-abiding man" (1978, 620). It would also befit Arjuna's caution to Bhīma, when Bhīma is ready to burn Yudhiṣṭhira's arms for allowing Draupadī's disrobing, which he translates differently: "no one may overreach a law-abiding elder brother (*bhrātaraṃ dhārmikaṃ jyeṣṭham*)" (2.61.8).

24. Book 1 has thirty-two of the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s sixty-seven usages of *dhārmik-*, with twenty-two of these in the stories by and about Viśvāmitra. Of these, nine are about Viśvāmitra or members of his prior royal family, the Kauśikas, with three for King Kuśanābha (1.32.5, 20; 50.18); six describe Ikṣvākus (Aṃśumant, 41.1; Bhagīratha, 41.7, 11; Viśāla, 46.11; Kuśāśva, 46.15; and Triśaṅku, 58.2); three reference Janaka (69.7) and others in his line (69.2, 70.8); three are about Viśvāmitra as a Ṛṣi (51.7; 57.23, 64.22); one each describe Bhṛgu (37.11) and Vasiṣṭha (53.4); one references Aditi's sons, that is, the gods (44.14); and one is about Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa as they reverence the Sarayū River (1.23.10). Book 2 has twenty-one of the remaining thirty-five usages, two of which describe the Ikṣvāku ancestors Sagara (32.20) and Nābhāga (102.27); four each reference Daśaratha and Bharata; two reference Rāma; and one describes the boy whom Daśaratha killed by mistake (58.26). Books 1 and 2, with 5262.5 (28 percent) of the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s 19,100 verses (Brockington 1998, 65), thus has fifty-three (79 percent) of its sixty-seven usages.

25. Vālmīki seems to protest too much in making the solar line so much more "law-abiding" than the lunar (it includes, among other flawed monarchs, the cannibal Kalmāṣapāda [see chapter 4 § B.1.d.i], though not, in Vālmīki's genealogies, the wayward Mahābhiṣa [see chapter 8 § B and Brodbeck 2010*d*]). Kālidāsa picks up on the utterly normative character of solar line kings, "who, in childhood, studied all good arts, and next in youth sought each worldly joy; who in age lived hermit's lives; and cast away their bodies by devotion's power at last" (*Raghuvaṃśa* 1.8; Devadhar [1985] 2005, 2; reference thanks to Vishwa Adluri). Thapar 2005*m*, 723–28 contrasts the two lines in terms of solar primogeniture versus lunar segmentation, geographical spread, and openness to non-normative kinship patterns: "rulers of Kosala and Videha are . . . seen as belonging to co-lateral lines" and "Ikṣvāku descendants seem hardly able to move away from the middle Ganga plain" (724–25). Ikṣvāku dynasty constructions, which include Ikṣvāku connections for the Buddha (see chapter 4 § A), merit further study.

As Rāma leaves Ayodhyā, Daśaratha tries to hold him in view:

> As long as the king could see his beloved law-abiding son, he seemed to stand firm on the ground just to have him in sight. (2.37.2)

Soon Rāma's charioteer Sumantra returns to the desolate city, saying,

> We shall never again show ourselves at feasts or sacrifices, at weddings or great assemblies, since law-abiding Rama will not be there. (2.51.11)

Finally, as Book 2 rounds to its close, Bharata, finding Daśaratha dead upon his return to Ayodhyā, tells his mother Kaikeyī it is she who should be banished, and snaps:

> What possible wrong could severely law-abiding (*bhṛśadhārmikaḥ*) Rāma have done you, that because of you they [Daśaratha and Rāma] should have found death and banishment both at once? (2.68.3).

After Book 2, one meets such terms far less often, with only two more usages for Rāma—the first couched in the negative when Vālin rebukes him for shooting him from ambush and says he did not know Rāma was "an un-law-abiding hypocrite (*dharmadhvajam adhārmikam*), like a well overgrown with grass" (4.17.18).[26]

If one looks further into the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s more edifying and entertaining ancillary tales, while it is true that most of them are in its first or last books, not all are, and some are told by Rāma and Sītā themselves.[27] As in the *Mahābhārata*, which knows many of the same ancillary narratives, they are told to shed light on evolving situations in the main story, and are directly or indirectly illustrative of *dharma*. But the differences with the *Mahābhārata* are equally striking.

First, Vālmīki has no other generic term for them than "marvellous" or "colorful" *stories*, *kathā*, and thus does not set them off generically.[28] In this

26. The last usage for Rāma comes at 6.11.27 where Rāma's monkey counsellors praise him for acting deliberately in receiving Rāvaṇa's brother Vibhīṣaṇa.

27. Those in Books 2–7 include Rāma's tale of the Ṛṣi Agastya's destruction of the Asuras Vātāpi and Ilvala and his arresting of the growth of Mount Vindhya (3.10.52–64, 77–83; cf. *Mbh* 3.94–108); and the story of the bi-gendered Ila/Ilā (7.78–79; on which see chapter 12 § C), followed by that of Purūravas (*Rām* 7.80–81). Sītā's include her story to Anasūyā of her own marvellous birth (2.110–11), on which see chapter 10; and her story to Rāma about the ascetic seduced by Indra's sword who turned violent and went to hell (3.8). Others include Bharata's story to Kaikeyī about the cow Surabhī (2.68); Vasiṣṭha's to Rāma of the origin of the world and the Ikṣvākus' genealogy and tradition of primogeniture (2.102); Sugrīva's to Rāma about the buffalo demon Dundubhi (4.11); and the stories of the sage Niśākara-Muni (4.49) and the Puṣpaka chariot (6.109). Cf. Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 470 n. 31. A thorough inventory would be welcome.

28. The *Rāmāyaṇa* makes very selective use of the terms by which it defines itself in course, tying them from the beginning into its poetic inspiration and using them only rarely to define other stories told in passing (e.g., *ākhyāna* once for the "Descent of the Gaṅgā"; *purāṇa* once for old prophetic lore on Rāma's future life)—never *upākhyāna*. Uses of *kathā* can be more poignant, as when Anasūyā asks Sītā about her birth and "*svayaṃvara*" as a story she has heard (*Rām* 2.110.23–24); again, see chapter 10.

fashion, and in contrast to the *Mahābhārata*, the terms are used strategically rather than definitionally, and they are not used to emphasize the interplay between the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s parts and its whole. Emerging from and flowing back into the passages that frame the *Rāmāyaṇa* (the *upodghāta* and the Aśvamedha recital scene), such stories fall within a single poetic narrative that is portrayed as being addressed uninterruptedly to Rāma (with the one exception at the recital scene where Rāma tells someone else or some others to "listen"). They are not conveyed to multiple audiences within the main story or ultimately to further audiences through a thrice-told stacking of dialogical frames (see Shulman 2001, 28–33; Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 464).

Second, the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s single unfolding frame leaves the rest of the *Rāmāyaṇa* to be all in verse without unversified phrases like "So and so spoke (*uvāca*)" to set off units by speakers, and without dialogical shifts from frame to frame or from lead narrators to subnarrators, including narrators of ancillary narratives. Thus third, no matter who tells such ancillary tales to whom, and even if the primary speaker or listener is Rāma, they are all told ultimately to Rāma within the "profound adventure" he hears from his sons. Indeed, Rāma hears his boys start with the first twenty *sargas* beginning "from the sight of Nārada" (*nārada-darśanāt*) (7.84.11)—that is, from the beginning of the *upodghāta* on. Rāma would have heard all three of Vālmīki's inspirations and all about how extraordinarily law-abiding he and so many others were who all behaved so well! Rather than having dialogical frames, the *Rāmāyaṇa* frame makes the whole poem an apostrophe to Rāma.

The *Mahābhārata* differs. It has unversified inset phrases to indicate speaker shifts. It has multiple "chief listeners" and no one character within the main story who listens to the whole. And it sets off its ancillary tales both in its frontmatter and its framing with specific generic terms. Having proceeded so far with the neutral term "ancillary stories" (see Gombach 2000; cf. Nanavati 1982), we may now call the *Rāmāyāṇa*'s ancillary stories sidestories in contrast to those in the *Mahābhārata*, which can be called subtales—one reason for this being that they are all told by subnarrators. Be it noted that while I work with a list of sixty-seven stories defined as subtales in one way or another within the *Mahābhārata*, this is not a closed group, and many more of this epic's ancillary tales conform to a "subtale type."[29]

In having numerous ancillary stories cited in its table of contents, the *Parvasaṃgraha*'s chief terms for them are *akhyāna*, "tale," and *upākhyāna*,

29. For my count of sixty-seven *Mahābhārata upākhyānas*, along with the point that "it is not a boundaried group," see Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 467–69. For a looser list of thirty *upākhyānas* (including three in Appendices) in just the *Śāntiparvan* (where I list only fourteen), see Belvalkar 1954–66, clxiii (the list is by V. M. Bedekar).

"subtale."[30] Both are also used for the *Mahābhārata* as a whole: *ākhyāna* frequently,[31] leaving a rather bizarre impression at the one such usage of *upākhyāna* (1.2.236a), which, right after the *Parvasaṃgraha*, seems to suggest that the *Mahābhārata* is a subtale of something else![32] The *Mahābhārata* also reserves the term *upākhyāna* for tales told within or pending from the first dialogue level of Vaiśaṃpāyana and Janamejaya. It does not use it for stories in the *Pauṣya* (1.3), *Pauloma-* (1.4–12), and *Āstīka-Parvans* (1.13–53), which, as extended frontmatter, are narrated to Śaunaka and the other Naimiṣa Forest Ṛṣis by the bard Ugraśravas, and include the stories of Kadrū and Vinatā, Garuḍa, the Churning of the Ocean, and so on. The *Parvasaṃgraha* reflects this, mentioning as *upākhyānas* only substories told within the main narrative, which makes them tales told to members of the larger Kaurava–Pāṇḍava household, including Janamejaya, to enable those listeners to consider what varied narrators deem to be pertinent to the listeners' questions and situations. This distinctive use of *upākhyāna* only for stories subordinate (*upa-*) to the main story (often called an *ākhyāna*) suggests what may be the primary significance of the term *upākhyāna*, which seems to originate with the *Mahābhārata*.[33] In contrast, it is possible to say that the number of *upākhyānas* in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is zero.[34]

Mahābhārata substories are important to this chapter because in the next section I will involve them in my interpretation of the episode of "The Yakṣa's Questions." One surprise about that episode is that the *Parvasaṃgraha* calls it an *upākhyāna*, describing it as "The Firesticks Subtale where Dharma Instructs His Son (*āraṇeyam upākhyānaṃ yatra dharmo 'nvaśāt sutam*)" (1.2.127ab). To call it a subtale looks incongruous, for not only is it part of the epic's main story,[35] it is in fact unique because its listener hears *questions* rather than a

30. For the seven *upākhyānas* mentioned in the *Parvasaṃgraha*, see Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 469 n. 29. *Ākhyāna* is used there ten times to describe thirteen tales, all but two of which are elsewhere also called *upākhyānas* (it seems that metrical fit may sometimes decide which term is used).

31. It is the most frequently used term for the whole, used even more often than *itihāsa* (Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 465).

32. I have suggested Veda (Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 471), not entirely whimsically since the *Mahābhārata* is the "fifth Veda." On these matters, see *Idem*, 465, 470–71. The passage (1.2.236–41) is rich in genre terms and in referring to the *Mahābhārata* as a source that other poets will live off of; see chapter 5 § C; Hiltebeitel 2009*a*, 202–5.

33. I propose this as an improvement over my suggestion in Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 270–72 that whereas *ākhyānas* can be overarching tales containing subnarratives, as with the multistoried *Āstīkaparvan* (*Mbh* 1.13–53) billed as an *ākhyāna* at 23.5cd and 13.4a), *upākhyānas* tend to be uninterrupted single or closely intertwined tales.

34. See Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 470, 476. There is an interpolated verse in the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s Aśvamedha recital scene where the twins tell Rāma that the *Rāmāyaṇa* has 24,000 verses and a 100 *upākhyāna*s (7.1328*, following 7.85.20), but this is only suggestive of *Mahābhārata* influence.

35. Only three others—the *Saubhavadha-* (3.15–23), *Ambā-* (5.170–93), and *Nakula-Upākhyānas* (14.92–96)—involve main characters in their current lives. I regret saying that the Yakṣa episode is the only such case (2005*a*, 484).

sub-*story*. In effect, Yudhiṣṭhira *lives* a substory, and draws, I will argue, on information learned from hearing other substories in his answers. I will thus interpret the episode as a "substory clearing house": one in which Yudhiṣṭhira is tested on what he has learned so far in life, for which the subtales he has heard in the forest provide a fair index. This offers us a way to approach the *Mahābhārata*'s subtales by thinking of them in four broad groups. First come ten in Book 1 that Yudhiṣṭhira has not heard. Second are the twenty-one, all but one of them recounted in Book 3, that he hears by the time he meets his father Dharma disguised as a Yakṣa. Eight subtales are then told between Books 5 and 9 that relate mainly to themes of war. Of these, Yudhiṣṭhira hears only the first, which recounts a set of stories about Indra through which the narrator predicts Yudhiṣṭhira's victory (*Mbh* 5.9–18). Finally, there are twenty-seven postwar subtales, of which Yudhiṣṭhira hears twenty-six, all but one of them in Books 12 and 13.[36] As hypothesized at the beginning this section, unlike the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s early sidestories which foreground the dharmic excellence of the hero, some of the *Mahābhārata*'s earliest subtales (I will now mention the first five) introduce matters of legal precedent.

We met one of the clearest examples of this in chapter 8 § G, where Pāṇḍu tells Kuntī the story of young Śvetaketu's repeal of the "eternal *dharma*" of women's sexual freedom by ruling that henceforth, women's unfaithfulness will constitute aborticide or brahmanicide, as will seducing someone else's chaste wife, and that a wife who refuses a husband who tells her to perform *niyoga* "shall incur the same evil." As noted, Pāṇḍu introduces this story as "ancient Law (*dharmam . . . purāṇam*)" (1.113.3), which means that it is not explicitly an *upākhyāna*. But it is his direct answer to Kuntī's necrophilia story (*kathā*) about King Vyuṣitāśva, which is the *Mahābhārata*'s fifth subtale called the *Vyuśitāśva-Upākhyāna*—the only one told by a woman, though, as we shall see in chapter 10, Draupadī also tells a story of the "subtale type." Among the early subtales, however, the fourth is also about legal precedent and a change in prior law. This is the *Aṇīmāṇḍavya-Upākhyāna* (1.101), which introduces a change in law when the sage Māṇḍavya learns from Dharma—who is functionally tantamount here to Yama Dharmarāja, the god of death who oversees karmic retribution—that the reason he ended his life with an impalement stake up his rectum is that he mistreated insects similarly in his childhood. Māṇḍavya establishes that there will henceforth be a "limit (*maryādā*) on the fruition of *dharma*": that sins committed before the age of fourteen will not be counted an offense; and he curses Dharma to take birth as Vidura (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 192–95).

36. This classification differs from those in Hiltebeitel 2005*a* (where, for some reason, I have Yudhiṣṭhira hear forty-nine subtales [472] rather than the forty-eight reached here).

Equally significant, in a different way, are the first three subtales. These introduce legal precedent not so much as "supreme court" changes in the law itself, as in setting the legal precedents for handling crisis situations in the lunar dynasty. As the epic's first subtale, the *Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna* (1.62–69) encodes caste prerogatives[37] and gender roles.[38] King Duṣyanta faces Śakuntalā's paternity suit as a legal court case, in which she invokes the agreement (*samaya*; 69.25) she secured before agreeing to make love to him; and the court case concerns the royal inheritance of their son, the eponym Bharata. In the second subtale, the *Yayāti-Upākhyāna* (1.70–80), Yayāti mishandles matters involving his rival wives—the first a Brahmin and the second an asuric Kṣatriya—with his inheritance going to his youngest son Pūru, born to the junior wife rather than to his "disqualified eldest" Yadu, son of the Brāhmaṇī.[39] The third *upākhyāna* is then one we have met. In the *Mahābhīṣa-Upākhyāna* (1.91), an *adhyāya* early in the story of Mother Gaṅgā's intervention in this same dynastic line, one learns of the agreements made by Gaṅgā and the Vasus after King Mahābhiṣa's heavenly indiscretion, which all take on binding legal force in the lives of King Śaṃtanu and his son Bhīṣma (see chapter 8 § B). In effect, these lessons in legal precedent present just the opposite of what we have seen in the foregrounding that Rāma's ever so law-abiding ancestors provide for him. It is not that lunar dynasty kings are less law-abiding. It is just that they bring the law into play because they like to mess around, which results in legal tangles that carry forward into the main story.

With this in mind, and also taking into consideration our four-phase categorization of *Mahābhārata* subtales, it is useful to reflect on Masaji Chiba's comparative analysis of a "three-level structure of law" as involving official law, unofficial or informal law, and basic legal postulates (1986, 5–7).[40] The first five *upākhyānas* (the fifth, i.e., along with its counterstory told by Pāṇḍu), present official law: in the first four cases direct from Vaiśaṃpāyana and thus straight from Vyāsa; in the

37. See Biardeau 1979, 118: "the apparently secondary accounts with which the epic is stuffed, far from being what one lately calls interpolations, are the reprise under a symbolic form of the dominant message of the principal account, which they thus aide to decipher while contributing to the progression of the intrigue. Śakuntalā's birth is no exception to the rule: it is clear right away that the theme of *varṇa* mixing takes charge of the story." Her father Viśvāmitra wants to be a Brahmin but is still a Kṣatriya when he sires her with the Apsaras Menakā, which satisfies Duṣyanta that she is a Kṣatriya so that he can propose their instant Gandharva union, even though later, in rejecting her in court, he calls Viśvāmitra "this son of a Kṣatriya avidly desirous of Brahminhood (*brāhmaṇatve lubdhaḥ*)" (68.74). Śakuntalā has a different idea of her *varṇa* status at least on her mother's side, which is that Menakā is *brahmayoni*, "born of Brahmā," or "of Brahmanic birth" (68.68), making her the projection of Viśvāmitra's desire to become a Brahmin, and giving Śakuntalā a superior status to Duṣyanta (Biardeau 118, 120).

38. Śakuntalā puts some emphasis on her preparation to be a devoted wife or *pativratā*, which the Southern Recension intensifies, tying this reassurance into her becoming Duṣyanta's *agramahiṣī* or "primary chief queen" (Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*d*).

39. See Dumézil 1973, 15–27; Defourny 1978, 20–37, 57–157; Biardeau 1979, 115, 125.

40. Chiba 1986, 5–7. See Menski (2003) 2005, 71 and *passim* with reference to "Hindu law."

fifth case from a more dubious source, Pāṇḍu. The subtales Yudhiṣṭhira then listens to up to "The Yakṣa's Questions" are more for his and the Pāṇḍavas' entertainment and edification. Some of them present "mirror stories" held up to the predicaments the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī find themselves in,[41] but all of them may be said, generally, to present narratives from which matters of precedent in unofficial or informal law can be inferred by their careful first listeners headed by Yudhiṣṭhira. The third group surrounding the war is then for the most part less interesting regarding law and its impact on Yudhiṣṭhira or the dynastic line, with an exception for the *Ambā-Upākhyāna* (5.170–93), which takes us back into the miasmas brought about by Bhīṣma's abduction of the "three Ambikās" of Kāśi and explains his singular vow not to fight with anyone who has been born a woman (see chapter 8 §§ D and E). Finally, the fourth group of postwar subtales can be said to engage a now more mature and wisened Yudhiṣṭhira in thinking through basic legal postulates as he listens with his wife and brothers.[42] Chiba defines these as follows: "A *legal postulate* is a value principle or value system specifically connected with a particular official or unofficial law, which acts to found, justify, or orient the latter" (1986, 6; author's italics). This fits quite nicely the broad headings of Rājadharma, Āpaddharma, Mokṣadharma,[43] and Dānadharma through which nearly all the postwar *upākhyanas*—including the White Island "narrative," said to be the "essence" of all the *upākhyānas*,[44] and the "Horse's Head *Upākhyāna*" (12.334) that it leads Śaunaka to ask about—are threaded into Yudhiṣṭhira's dialogue with Bhīṣma. Moreover, it is mainly in this skein up to and including the last subtale that Yudhiṣthira hears a number of what I have called "puzzle piece" *upākhyānas* in which Dharma either appears himself in the story, sometimes in disguise, as he did to ask Yudhiṣṭhira "The Yakṣa's Questions," or in which *dharma/dharman* is disguised in puzzling characters who have that term in their names.[45]

This four-phase analysis of subtales can thus help us to contextualize the episode of "The Yakṣa's Questions." Yudhiṣṭhira's forte of repeatedly asking

41. Biardeau 2002, 1: 412–13 uses this term for the *Nala-Upākhyāna* (3.50–78), *Rāma-Upākhyāna* (3.257–76), and *Sāvitrī-Upākhyāna* (3.277–83)—three of the best known, and all from the Forest Book 3, to which I have suggested adding the *Sunda-Upasunda-Upākhyāna* (1.204) which, being about two demon brothers who fight over one wife, holds up an "inverse mirror" to the Pāṇḍavas' polyandry (Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 482; cf. 476, 483).

42. See Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 472, and 490 on *Mbh* 13.57.42–44, the one mention of Draupadī listening to Bhīṣma, which she has probably been doing all along.

43. See Fitzgerald 1980, 231: "So the majority of texts collected in the MDh focus directly on *mokṣadharma-s*, that is, behavioral or attitudinal norms (*dharma-s*) leading to *mokṣa*, ultimate personal transcendence of the limits, pain, and misery common to the situation of all living beings."

44. See chapter 6 § B: in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, when Bhīṣma tells Yudhiṣṭhira about Nārada's journey to White Island, he indicates that this "narrative" (*ākhyāna*) embodies the "essence" of all the other *dharmya* subtales he has transmitted (12.326.114–15). See Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 506–507; cf. also *Mbh* 12.238.13–15.

45. For preliminary discussion, see Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 487–88, 491–92.

and sometimes answering questions about *dharma* governs much of the *Mahābhārata*, particularly, as we have outlined, in the Forest Book 3, and in the oft-called "didactic" Books 12 and 13.

D. Monstrous Encounters

At the beginning and end of each epic's third Book, as Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira enter and leave the forests, they encounter monsters who provide the Forest Books with bookends. The first monsters, Kirmīra in the *Mahābhārata* (3.11–12) and Virādha in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (3.3), merely guard access to the forests. They have little immediately to do with *dharma*. But two things are interesting about the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s Virādha episode. One is that it is not mentioned in the *Rāmopākhyana*, the *Mahābhārata*'s subtale on Rāma and its main telling of the Rāma story.[46] This means that although the bookend symmetry one finds in the *Rāmāyaṇa* could be modeled on the *Mahābhārata*, it cannot be modeled on the *Rāmopākhyāna*. The second is that the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s forest-entry and forest-exit scenes have far greater symmetry between them than the *Mahābhārata*'s. Whereas the *Mahābhārata*'s Kirmīra and Yakṣa encounters have only their benchmark positions in common, the two *Rāmāyaṇa* encounters are virtual duplicates. A brief summary of the beginning of *Rāmāyaṇa* Book 3 will allow me to make this point.

This Forest Book's very first line finds Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Sītā entering the vast Daṇḍaka Forest: the southern destination required of Rāma by Kaikeyī (*Rām* 2.10.28) and the forest into which the great Ṛṣis, who gather fruits there, have both collectively and individually set forth Rāma's path (2.111.19). The trio first sees a circle of ashrams whose unnamed sages welcome Rāma and request his protection, since they regard him as their king whether he is in the city or the forest. But soon Virādha ("One Who Thwarts") looms before them, seizes Sītā, and challenges the brothers for entering this forest *with her*. Pained by seeing anyone else touch Sītā, Rāma fills the huge Rākṣasa with arrows and he and Lakṣmaṇa then each break off an arm to release her. Asking Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa who they are (3.3.1), Virādha realizes he has been slain by Rāma: a long-awaited blessing that relieves him from a curse. He can now go to heaven, but before that he tells Rāma to go next to the Ṛṣi Śarabhaṅga who "will see to your welfare" (3.22–24).

From there, Rāma is relayed by Ṛṣis from one forest site to another until Sītā is abducted, whereupon Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa start looking for her and happen upon a second Monster, Kabandha. As we turn to that story, which does

46. See *Mbh* 3.261.39–40, where it would be slotted: following Bharata's return to Ayodhyā, Rāma, "fearing that the townsfolk and countrymen would return," entered the Daṇḍaka Forest "by the hermitage of Śarabhaṅga."

have a slot in the *Rāmopākhyana*, the obvious difference is that this second monster cannot grab Sītā, who is now abducted. I believe that Vālmīki would have had three reasons to invent the Virādha encounter. As preparation for Sītā's abduction by Rāvaṇa in this Book, he provides a glimpse of how Rāma reacts to Sītā being touched. It supplies a bookend on the model of the two monstrous encounters in the *Mahābhārata*. And it is a rehearsal for the Kabandha encounter, which the *Rāmopākhyāna* does include, quite indispensably.[47]

D.1. Rāma and Kabandha

When Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa start looking for Sītā, having learned from the dying vulture Jaṭāyus only that she has been abducted by Rāvaṇa, they pass into the Krauñca Forest, still hoping to find her. There is no Krauñca Forest in the *Rāmopākhyana*. It could be another invention of Vālmīkī to remind readers that the suffering of a female *krauñca* bird underlines the sentiments of grief in separation from one's beloved in Vālmīki's poem. Here the brothers encounter Kabandha, whose name means "Headless trunk" and can also denote a sacrificial post. Kabandha guards the way past him as Virādha did; the encounter is similar, but with one more exception. Kabandha will tell how to find the abducted Sītā, pointing the heroes out of the forests and into the impolitic rivalries of the monkey capital of Kiṣkindhā. Kabandha has neither a neck nor head but a single-eyed face in his stomach, a huge mouth to devour animals, and long arms to grab them that suddenly seize the brothers (3.65.15–20). Asking Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa who they are, and to state their purpose or be devoured (24–26), the heroes muster their courage and each sever one arm (66.6). Hearing from Lakṣmaṇa that his arms have been severed by Rāma, "who has the power of a god" (*asya devaprabhāvasya*; 11a), Kabandha realizes that this brings an end to a long curse which had restricted him to this hideous form until Rāma should cut off his arms and cremate him (67.6, 15). When Kabandha rises lustrously from his pyre, he says that Rāvaṇa's abode may be found if Rāma allies with Sugrīva: "Quickly make him a comrade (*vayasya*), having gone there now, Rāghava, sealing your compact in the presence of blazing fire to shun all trickery."[48]

47. A suggestive piece of evidence that Vālmīki has imported features of the Kabandha story back into his Virādha story is that Virādha is a former Gandharva named Tumburu (*Rām* 3.3.8), just as Kabandha is a former Gandharva named Viśvāvasu in the *Rāmopākhyana* (*Mbh* 3.63,38), whereas in the *Rāmāyaṇa* Vālmīki upgrades Kabandha into a former unnamed Dānava (*Rām* 3.66.8).

48. *Rām* 3.68.13. In the *Rāmopākhyāna*, the killing of Kabandha sets free a *puruṣa* that not only reveals Kabandha's prior identity to have been that of the Gandharva Viśvāvasu cursed by Brahmā to pass through a Rākṣasa womb (34–38), but the partly erroneous information that Sītā was abducted by Rāvaṇa, who dwells in Laṅkā, and that Rāma should seek out the help of Sugrīva, who "surely knows Rāvaṇa's seat" (*Mbh* 3.263.34–42; van Buitenen 1978, 737). See Hiltebeitel 2009*a*, 194–95.

The fairly unusual term *vayasya*, which has no corresponding usage in the *Rāmopākhyāna*, literally means "contemporary," but is used in the sense of "commiserator" or "sympathizer." Vālmīki will continue to use it to define Rāma and Sugrīva's special kind of friendship. Meanwhile, the caution to avoid trickery makes Kabandha's advice moral, at least as it bears on Rāma's arrangements with Sugrīva, if not with Sugrīva's brother Vālin, Sugrīva's rival for the throne—a matter we will take up in section D.

In both epics, the second monstrous encounter thus has the role of guiding the king beyond the forests as he begins his return to society—in Rāma's case, entering the no-man's land of monkeys which inversely mirrors the politics of Ayodhyā; in Yudhiṣṭhira's a place of hiding—before the eventual demands of war. The king's *dharma* is changing along with his circumstances, and these second monster encounters are pivotal to the changes he needs to make. Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira are no longer honorable exiles who have the leisure to model their royal *dharma* and their meritorious words and actions on the sagely instructions they receive along their forest route. They will have to face the calamities their *dharma* biographies have been preparing them for. Kabandha makes this point only implicitly, never mentioning *dharma* directly. In the *Mahābhārata*, this second encounter places Yudhiṣṭhira's *dharma* under an explicit and thorough review.

D.2. The Yakṣa's Questions

It would seem straightforward to examine the *Mahābhārata* episode of "The Yakṣa's Questions" (*Mbh* 3.295–99) from the standpoint of *dharma*, since the son whom Dharma desires to know through questions, Yudhiṣṭhira, is called Dharmarāja and Dharmaputra (son of Dharma). But a difficulty lies in the fact that readings of the episode have done little to explore the relationship between *dharma* (lower case) and Dharma (the deity),[49] or have sought to diminish its significance by maintaining that the episode is really about something else. The two sustained readings that I am aware of, both published in 1991, are of this second type. Gail Hinich Sutherland interprets the story as one in a "cycle" of four about aquatic spirits, taking Varuṇa rather than Dharma as the Yakṣa's prototype, since he is the lord of waters, and approaching D/*dharma* as embodying an opposition between natural and

49. I set aside Biardeau 2002, 1: 755–60, which builds on the promising point that "Tout cet épisode est un construction du dieu Dharma" (759), but does not pursue it very far, and not at all into the details of the Yakṣa's questions. See also Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 186–91, attempting to locate the episode among Indo-European parallels; Laine 1991, 280–81, taking the episode as initiatory, with Dharma "understood . . . in terms of universal, saṃnyāsic virtues, the anti-structural values of *communitas*"; Klaes 1975, 78–81, with some points to be noted.

social Law that the waters and Varuṇa somehow mediate (1991, 85–103). Sutherland is not much concerned with the episode's *Mahābhārata* context, though in bringing in the Buddhist *Devadhamma Jātaka* (*Jātaka* 6, Sutherland 93–96; Cowell [1895] 2005, 1: 21–23) as the only strong parallel, she can help one to formulate hypotheses about how the *Mahābhārata*'s allomorph is deployed in the epic.

The episode's most stimulating reading, David Shulman's, finds it to be about a "preoccupation with language," and that it encourages a "dissection of language levels" ([1991] 2001, 42, 51). Shulman lodges *dharma* at an intermediate level of meaning between a "simple truth" or "news" (*vartika*) level, and a "context-dependent" *daiva* or destined level that opens out on the "larger epic frame" through the "eyes of the narrator-poets" (53–55). But whereas the first level interests him for its direct formulation of obvious truth and the third "probably reflects a latent theory of knowledge in relation to language" in opening the episode to Yudhiṣṭhira's destiny (55–56), the *dharma* level concerns ethical language that has lesser interest from this perspective. Shulman sees it as the one whose "truth level" is most open to "potential disjunction" and "gaps" (51), since Yudhiṣṭhira's "chosen ideal" (57) of *ānṛśaṃsya*, which he translates mainly as "non-injury" (47; cf. 50, 58), is a *dharma* value that Yudhiṣṭhira will be unable to uphold, so that by the end the best he can do is to "curse" Dharma by linguistic means of negation (57–59).

I have urged that "non-injury" should be avoided in translating *ānṛśaṃsya*, since it does better to translate what falls under the domain of *ahiṃsā*, "non-violence" or "non-harming." I prefer to translate it more or less literally as "noncruelty."[50] Also, Yudhiṣṭhira is *not* unable to uphold this ideal, but rather keeps it before him throughout his life[51]—including, as we shall soon see, even in the *Mahābhārata* war.

Now, while an episode based on riddles is certainly enriched by analysis of its language, I feel that it is unlikely, given the long-standing Vedic association of *dhárman* with enigmas (see chapter 3 § C) and the puzzle-packed character of the *Mahābhārata* as a whole, that the episode has an unusual linguistic preoccupation. In fact, in three cases where Shulman assembles evidence to

50. From *anṛśaṃsa*, "uncruel"; "ānṛśaṃsya begins from a feeling of the 'absence of injuring *men*' (*nṛ*), . . . as if that were a good and realistic starting point for a species trying to imagine a way out of its own cycles of violence" (Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 211). James Fitzgerald (personal comunication, 2008) says he likes to translate it as "kindness," which I too like—for reasons I will bring out below—for its resonance with kin, suggesting the coinage "kindredness." Others have done with "compassion" or "benevolence." See chapter 5 § D at n. 117, as the first listed among thirteen *sādhāraṇa darmas* (*Mbh* 12.285.23).

51. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 202–14, 260, 268–70, 275 (he also hears about it in stories told to him: 230–31 299, 303). The point is nicely traced by Klaes (1975, 71–73, 76–81, 89, 94, 96, 112, 116, 124–28, 133–36) and Lath (1990).

that effect, he puts a twist on usages that are not accepted by the Pune Critical Edition.[52] Nor does he discuss one of the question-and-answer sets that explicitly links language with *dharma*:

> Yakṣa: What in a word has to do with *dharma* (*kiṃ svid ekapadaṃ dharmyam*)? What in a word is fame? What in a word has to do with heaven? What in a word is happiness?
>
> Yudhiṣṭhira: In a word, skill has to do with *dharma*. In a word, giving is fame. In a word, truth has to do with heaven. In a word, morality (*śīla*) is happiness. (13.297.48–49)

Yudhiṣṭhira and Dharma seem to agree that *dharma* has to do with skill in finding the right encapsulating word. Moreover, while dissection into levels can be a useful heuristic, it is a scholarly contrivance, and in this case a problematic one from the start, since Shulman draws the terms for his first "news" level from an interpolation that was added to another interpolation: a radically negative statement about reasoning (*tarka*) in relation to *śruti* and *dharma* that was only belatedly put into Yudhiṣṭhira's mouth:

> Reasoning is without foundation (*tarko pratiṣṭhaḥ*); the *śrutis* contradict one-another (*śrutayo vibhinnā*); there is not even one Ṛṣi whose opinion is authoritative (*yasya matam pramāṇam*). The truth about *dharma* (*dharmasya tattvam*) is hidden in a cave. (3, App. 32, lines 65–68 = Kinjawadekar 3.313.117)

This lovely verse,[53] which may recall the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*'s identification of its "subtle *dharma*" with the *ātman* hidden in the cave of the heart (*KU* 2.11–12), is an obvious interpolation added onto an equally obvious prior interpolation. The verse occurs in only one manuscript, the so-called "Vulgate" edited by Nīlakaṇṭha;[54] and it comes amid fourteen lines added to a prior interpolation

52. See Shulman 2001, 41–42 on Vulgate [= Vlg] 3.312.1c with *artham* rather than CE 3.296.1c with *atra*, taking the former as "meaning" where, whatever it means (Johnson 2005, 281 ignores it), the CE does without it; *Idem* 44–45, 59, citing and translating *vṛnute* (Vlg 313.53c) rather than CE *vṛścate* (3.297.35c), taking the former (√*vṛ*) to indicate that the Vedic verse (*ṛc*; Vlg) or speech (*vāk*; CE) "alone *veils* (or *envelopes*) the sacrifice which does not extend beyond it," whereas the CE's √*vraśc* with *vāk* suggests the less cryptic but more mantrically interesting "speech alone *cuts up* (or *cuts off*) the sacrifice which does not extend beyond it"; *Idem* 49 on Vlg. 313.120b with *śabdaḥ puṇyena karmaṇā* rather than CE 3.297.63b with *śabdaḥ puṇyasya karmaṇaḥ*, translating the former, "The word [or sound] touches heaven and earth *together with [in association with, through] a good deed*; as long as that word exists, one may be called a man" (Shulman's brackets, my italics) and taking this to suggest "that a human being is someone who, through language, connects disjointed domains," whereas it might suffice to say (with van Buitenen 1975, 803) that "*word of a good deed*" or "*the repute of a good deed* touches heaven and earth."

53. On the verse's renown, see Matilal 2002, 67; Shulman 2001, 54.

54. As Sukthankar 1942, 1,032 notes, "Dn alone cont. (!)" Does the exclamation point reflect a suspicion that the commentator could be the author of this verse? I believe that it would be a legitimate suspicion. Cf. Austin 2009, 609–15 on another intervention by Nīlakaṇṭha.

found in only three Northern manuscripts, the Vulgate included, "which," says the Critical Edition editor, "from the documentary viewpoint is a palpable interpolation, as is also evident from intrinsic considerations" (Sukthankar 1942, 1,032). Having just left Draupadī at the hermitage of Mārkaṇḍeya, who has by this time prophesied the Kali *yuga* (see chapter 7) and told many tales featuring *dharma*, it is unlikely to be Yudhiṣṭhira's view of Ṛṣis at the end of his twelve years in the forest that no Ṛṣi's opinion on *dharma* is authoritative. Yet Shulman sees Yudhiṣṭhira's "exposition" as "wholly appropriate to the epic world. Logic is no use, even the Veda and the sages offer mutually contradictory opinions . . . ; the truth of *dharma* is hidden and enigmatic perhaps ultimately beyond recovery; the world's creatures die before our eyes day after day and we still pursue flimsy illusions of security" (2001, 54). We also saw in chapter 1 that there is no reason to tag Yudhiṣṭhira with a rejection of logic. The fourteen-line interpolation is a beautiful passage,[55] and we cannot always be this insistent in favoring the Critical Edition. But in this episode, the Critical Edition yields a highly credible text in which the Yakṣa has already ended his questions, and Yudhiṣṭhira his answers, in a provocatively satisfying way without these addenda. According to the Critical Edition, Yudhiṣṭhira turns the last question—the eighteenth—back on his interrogator:

> Yakṣa: What is direction? What is proclaimed water? What is food, Pārtha, and what poison? Tell the time of a ritual for the dead (a *śrāddha*) and then drink and carry.
>
> Yudhiṣṭhira: The good are direction, space is water, the cow is food, a request[56] is poison; a Brahmin is the time for a ritual for the dead—or what do you think, Yakṣa? (3.297.60–61)

Indeed, the Yakṣa has invited this turnabout and implied the end of this skein of questions by telling Yudhiṣṭhira he can finally drink if he answers *this one*. As we shall see, Shulman shows nicely how the questions and answers found in the Critical Edition and the Southern Recension build only to this point. But he leaves an impression of parity between versions, remarking that "the Vulgate continues with several further questions before reaching its own interesting

55. It begins with the Yakṣa asking, "Who is happy? What is amazing? What is the path, and what the simple truth (*vārtika*; cf. Johnson 2005, 319: "the news")? Answer these four questions and let your dead kinsmen live (*mṛtā jīvantu bāndavāḥ*)" (CE 3, App. 32, lines 59–61; Kinjawadekar 3.313.114). In brief, Yudhiṣṭhira's four answers are that the happy find happiness at home; the wonder is that people look for stability in a world of daily mortality; the path is "the way the great have gone" despite the hiddenness of *dharma* and the lack of any Ṛṣi who could authorize it; and the "news" or "simple truth" is that "time cooks all beings" (lines 62–72; Vulgate 3.313.115–18).

56. Perhaps "begging," for *prārthanā*. See Johnson 2005, 311.

closure" (51–52). The Critical Edition cannot be neglected when it uncovers eighteen original questions, that being the *Mahābhārata*'s signature number for a totality.[57]

I am thus not convinced that a *dharma* level is sandwiched between two more interesting language levels, nor am I clear how a *daiva* level might relate to a latent theory of language. I will open three lines of inquiry. One, already previewed, is that the episode is an *upākhyāna* clearing house. Second, I will propose that Dharma in the form of a Yakṣa signals not only his relation to death and Yama but a typical "possessing spirit." The Yakṣa does not really kill the four brothers; they only "fall down" or "collapse" (*ni-pat*), and Dharmarāja becomes something of an exorcist in getting the possessing spirit to reveal his true identity. The case for possession is easier to make in the *Devadhamma Jātaka*, where the Yakkha takes the two younger brothers to a cave and binds them, and is then, like so many of his ilk in Buddhist narratives, converted to the "true" or "good *dhamma*," which is what this Yakkha's single question was about, which only the Bodhisatta could answer without even needing to be asked.[58] Third, there is more to say about Yudhiṣṭhira's chosen value of noncruelty. Along the way I will also continue to emphasize the dispositive character of the Critical Edition.

D.2.A. PUZZLE PIECES AND SUBSTORIES. As we have seen, the *Parvasaṃgraha* calls this episode "The Firesticks Subtale where Dharma Instructs His Son" (1.2.127ab). The name partly resembles one given near the end of the unit itself to describe the benefits of reciting it: "The Great Rising Up and Meeting of the Father and the Son (*idaṃ samutthāna-samāgamaṃ mahat pituś ca putrasya ca*)" (3.298.27ab). I will get back to this usage of *samutthāna*, which I have translated as "Rising Up." But first let us consider the similarity with the *Nakula-Upākhyāna* (14.92–96). Being the only other *upākhyāna* to be both part of the *Mahābhārata*'s main story and have Yudhiṣṭhira as its interlocutor, it may give an index as to why the *Mahābhārata*'s "table of contents" strains the *upākhyāna* category to include "The Yakṣa's Questions." Like the latter, the *Nakula-Upākhyāna* or "The Mongoose Subtale" ends one of the *Mahābhārata*'s major *parvans* (Book 14)

57. Recognizing this number and its implications, see McGrath 2004, 198. Cf. Stein 1936, 1937. While the Southern Recension reaches the same turning point, it adds a few questions and thus has a different number of them. Cf. Shulman 2001, 61–62 on the decisive thirteenth and last riddle in the *Aṣṭavakrīya-Upākhyāna*, and the significance of that "totality" number with respect to the Pāṇḍavas' year in hiding. If one totality number hints at the completion of the Pāṇḍavas' exile, the other could suggest their completion of the *Mahābhārata*.

58. Hinich Sutherland 1991, 93–94. For a Buddhist story from the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya involving Yakṣas and suggestive of exorcism, see Schopen 2006, 340–43 and n. 47. It would seem that the deceased boy's *preta* or "ghost" is mentioned after gods, Nāgas, and Yakṣas as a lower spirit that cannot get in the monastery door because, unlike the others, it has not become devoted to the Buddha. Gods, Nāgas, and Yakṣas are possessing spirits that can be brought under the Buddha's warrant; see Obeyesekere 1984, 56–106.

with an appearance of Dharma in disguise, this time as a mongoose doubled by a further story about Dharma where he dons another disguise. This is the last subtale in the *Mahābhārata*, and its placement brings closure to the Aśvamedha sacrifice that is supposed to have cleared Yudhiṣṭhira of his postwar self-recriminations, but now leaves him with this mongoose to puzzle over, who tells him his sacrifice was not worth beans, or, more exactly, worth the grain a gleaner gets from picking over fields like a pigeon to feed his guests before he feeds his family or himself. The "Mongoose Subtale" is also the last of the string of subtales that I call puzzle pieces, most of which come at the ends of major units—*parvans* or *sub-parvans*.[59] All the puzzle piece subtales, like "The Yakṣa's Questions,"[60] mark transitions in the lifelong education of Yudhiṣṭhira.

Coming as the first unit of this puzzle-piece type to engage Yudhiṣṭhira, but also, as we saw in section B, coming after his hearing a whole skein of entertaining and edifying forest tales, "The Yakṣa's Questions" is thus intriguing because so many *upākhyāna* subcurrents run through it. What *are* Yudhiṣṭhira's priorities to go charging off after a Brahmin's firesticks, dragging his brothers with him and leaving Draupadī behind so soon after they have all heard Mārkaṇḍeya tell them the *Rāma-Upākhyāna* and the *Sāvitrī-Upākhyāna*, the first to relieve Yudhiṣṭhira's torments over Draupadī's abduction after she was also left behind, and the second to answer his question whether there was ever another woman as devoted to her husband(s)? The entire Yakṣa episode begins with Janamejaya asking Vaiśaṃpāyana what the Pāṇḍavas did next after Draupadī was abducted and they had gained her back (3.295.1–2), and immediately shows Yudhiṣṭhira to be as headstrong about a Brahmin's firesticks as he will shortly be about playing dice in disguise, which he learned how to do after listening to the *Nala-Upākhyāna*.[61] Such subtale repercussions only continue to widen.[62]

59. See above at n. 45. Bhīṣma recounts such subtales near or at the very end of the first three and at the beginning of the fourth sub*parvan*s of Books 12 and 13. Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 152, supposes that their positions indicate lateness, but their recurrence in such slots raises the stakes for such an argument. I prefer an argument by design. The *Śārṅgaka-Upākhyāna* at the end of Book 1 (1.220–25) could also be called a puzzle piece, but it does not involve Yudhiṣṭhira (see Hiltebeitel 2007*a*). Books 2, 5, and 10 also end with riddle-like disclosures that explain the prior action or reveal mysteries through stories that explain both past and future action. On the contrary, the war books *begin* with disclosures of what will happen at their ends.

60. On "The Yakṣa's Questions" as "a major point of transition," with the final test occurring "again at a moment of closure," see Shulman 2001, 41, 56.

61. I was mistaken to say that Yudhiṣṭhira gets this knowledge as one of his boons from answering the Yakṣa's questions (Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 484), although Dharma implicitly confirms it by guaranteeing the Pāṇḍavas' success in concealing themselves. It comes from Bṛhadaśva (3.78.14–17), the narrator of the *Nala-Upākhyāna*.

62. This is not the first time that chasing after a Brahmin's stolen goods was an all-consuming priority. Earlier, Arjuna reasoned it would be an overruling *dharma* to recover a Brahmin's stolen cows even though it meant interrupting Yudhiṣṭhira and Draupadī in the bedroom, where Arjuna had left his weapons, and a breach of the agreement the Pāṇḍavas had accepted after hearing the *Sunda-Upasunda-Upākhyāna* from the busybody Ṛṣi Nārada. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 760 on the two incidents; Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 264–68, 270 on the earlier episode and subtale and their repercussions, which involve Arjuna finding other wives, including Subhadrā.

I thus suggest that the Yakṣa's test challenges Yudhiṣṭhira to answer what he has learned by breaking down the narrative information he has received to its most irreducible units. "What in a word has to do with *dharma*?" (297.48a), quoted above, was the Yakṣa's twelfth question. The thirteenth is then especially suggestive of lessons learned from Yudhiṣṭhira's own life and from hearing about others' stories in subtales:

> Yakṣa: What is the self of a man, what is the friend made by fate, what is the support of his life, what is his highest resort?
>
> Yudhiṣṭhira: A son is the self of a man, a wife the friend made by fate, rain supports his life, giving is his highest resort.[63]

Each question and answer can be read with such encapsulation in mind. Note that Shulman shows how the Yakṣa's initial skein of (eighteen) questions suggests "a rough typology" with a narrative structure, beginning with ultimacy and cosmology, "including social cosmology"; moving on to cosmic linkages through sacrifice; boundaries between "human/non-human" and "living/dead"; alternation between the "dehumanizing" or "disanimating" and "the human, but still with cosmological coloring"; "'monk's riddles'" with "moral or ethical culmination"; "identification puzzles"; and finally riddles about death (2001, 44–47, 52–53). Death and the overlapping identities of Dharma and Yama are recurrent themes in all four phases of subtales.[64] Indeed, the last subtale Yudhiṣṭhira has heard in the forest before "The Yakṣa's Questions" is the *Sāvitrī-Upākhyāna* in which Sāvitrī brings her husband Satyavan back from death through her dialogue with Yama. More on that subtale in a moment.

Unlike most or all of the other forty-eight subtales addressed to all or most of the Pāṇḍavas, and usually Draupadī, "The Yakṣa's Questions" is addressed almost solely to Yudhiṣṭhira. Dharma first addresses Yudhiṣṭhira's brothers only separately as a disembodied voice to tell them they must answer his

63. *Mbh* 3.297.50–51: Yakṣa: *kiṃ svid ātmā manuṣyasya kiṃ svid daivakṛtaḥ sakhā/upajīvanaṃ kiṃ svid asya kiṃ svid asya parāyaṇam*. Yudhiṣṭhira: *putra ātmā manuṣyasya bhāryā daivakṛtaḥ sakhā/upajīvanaṃ ca parjanyo dānam asya parāyaṇam* (van Buitenen 1975, 802 trans.). Note that Yudhiṣṭhira overlooks Dharma's gender cue to name a friend in the masculine, and that he singles out *dānam*, giving, anticipating the *yugadharma* of the Kali yuga (see chapter 6 at n. 58). The hypermetric 51c has a metrically correct variant in S with *upajivyas* for *upajīvanam*, but that is not the case in 50c; see Shulman 2001, 44: "Wisdom, or survival" requires metric answers; silence "would be fatal."

64. See Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 475 n. 46, citing eight subtales involving Dharma and four involving Yama, having missed an encounter in hell with Dharma-Dharmarāja (Yama) in the *Jantu-Upākhyāna* (3.128.10–16). Among these, by the end of Book 3, Yudhiṣṭhira has heard the *Jantu-* and the *Sāvitrī-Upākhyānas*. Readers also know the *Aṇīmāṇḍavya-* and *Pañcendra-Upākhyāna* (1.189) in which Vyāsa reveals a connection between a sacrifice of the gods in which Yama interrupts his power over death, the births of the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī, and the surfeit of death that will occur for the kingship of Yama-Dharma's son in the *Mahābhārata* war (Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 119–20; 2005*a*, 481–82).

questions before they drink from a lake, and "kills" them when they do not pay heed. Then even after he revives them, he still addresses only Yudhiṣṭhira, though the brothers are now listening. Later in Books 17 and 18 when Dharma gives Yudhiṣṭhira two final "tests" (*jijñāsās*) that recall this one, he addresses him alone again, since the rest have just "really" died, and at last reveals, "This was the third test I made for you, king (*eṣā tṛtīyā jijñāsā tava rājan kṛtā mayā*)" (18.3.30ab). The last two tests come when Dharma sheds his last disguise as Yudhiṣṭhira's sole remaining companion, a dog, and when he becomes a divine messenger to show Yudhiṣṭhira his loved ones in hell. These two final appearances of Dharma are *parvan*-closing puzzle pieces as well (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 271–77). As tests, each *jijñāsā* is literally a "desire to know": Dharma wants to know his son, and whether his son knows D/*dharma*.

D.2.B. POSSESSION, EXORCISM, AND DETECTION. Let us now consider what it might mean that Dharma in the form of a Yakṣa signals not only a relation to Yama but a typical "possessing spirit" or "deity," and that the Yakṣa's interrogation of Yudhiṣṭhira is one by which Yudhiṣṭhira is able to get him to reveal his true identity as Dharma by asking a final question himself, as would be done in an exorcism.

Frederick Smith's recent book on possession offers a provocative contrast regarding the Sanskrit epics. Whereas the *Rāmāyaṇa* seems to have scant reference to possession,[65] the *Mahābhārata* is "the single text in South Asian literary history with the greatest concentration of possession" (2006, 250). Smith is reasonably representative in making *Mahābhārata* citations, but I will suggest that he might have organized his discussion differently. Taking a lexical approach, he finds that the *Mahābhārata* presents numerous instances of the three main terms for possession in Sanskrit and Indian vernaculars: *āveśa*, the main term, denoting rough and ready possession by forces (gods, spirits, demons) or emotions (like wrath) and involving "a shift in personality"; *graha*/*grahaṇa*, implying "seizure"; and *praveśa*, a more benign and "hazy" experience of "pervasion" (580–81). But Smith tends to see the *Mahābhārata* as a palimpsest with no discernible form in which there would be no need to differentiate possessions that carry along the main story from ones told of in subtales. First, of possessions

65. Smith says the *Rāmāyaṇa* seems to have largely "expunged or censored . . . popular religious praxis," and that the only instance of *āveśa* there attributes notions of possession only to "unnamed urban citizens, the hoi polloi, . . . and at that only rumored" (2006, 278; citing *Rām* 2.30.10). But there are other scenes that suggest possession: Rāma's sighting of his mother as he is leaving Ayodhyā, "who almost seemed to be dancing" (2.35.32ef); Rāma's madness upon the loss of Sītā (3.58–62; see Pollock 1991, 55–67); Sītā's seeming madness in captivity (5.24.2, on which see chapter 10 § D); and the monkeys' antics in the Honey Forest as they celebrate before telling Rāma they have found Sītā (5.59–62). But the point can be well taken that where Rāma, his brothers, Sītā, and other main characters are concerned, such suggestions of possession, if they are such, are not explicit.

found in the main story, Smith profitably discusses the prewar possessions (*āveśa*) by demons of Karṇa, Droṇa, Bhīṣma, etc., mentioned toward the end of Book 3 (267–68; 3.240.10–34); the war-ending possession of Aśvatthāman in Book 10 as an apocalyptic *grahaṇa* (271; 10.6–7); and Vidura's life-ending possession by pervasion (*pra-viś*) of Yudhiṣṭhira in Book 15, with both characters being personifications of Dharma so that Dharma henceforth more fully pervades just his son Yudhiṣṭhira (259; 15.33.25–28). But Smith does not mention that after the death of Irāvat (Arjuna's son with the serpent woman Ulūpī) on the eighth day of battle, the warriors on both sides fought on with heightened intensity, "possessed (*āviṣṭāḥ*) by Rākṣasas and Bhūtas" (*Mbh* 6.86.85). Second, of possessions found in subtales, Smith discusses several fantastic cases,[66] and notably that of Nala in the subtale of Nala and Damayantī (251–55), which, although he does not bring this out, opens retrospectives on possession in the epic dicing scene (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 220–46, 253, 261–62, 361). While the episodic instances are varied and entertaining, the increasingly intensified main sequence, which one could say is "resolved" in D/*dharma*'s "pervasion" of Yudhiṣṭhira by Vidura, along with the retrospective on dicing and madness offered by the *Nalopākhyāna*, now suggests to me the possibility that the *Mahābhārata* could be read, given certain milieus, as a possession script, with Dharma personified as the ultimate therapeutic agent whose tests and questions bring Yudhiṣṭhira through a transference to be able to take on that therapeutic role of embodying *dharma* in the main story. Let me make two points in favor of this interpretation before proceeding to the case in point.

First, to think of Dharma as a possessing deity may seem strange, and in any case a departure from the way *dharma* is represented in the legal literature. Yet Sudhir Kakar brings out opportunities to study the ways possession rituals are scripted for the god Dharmarāja in Rajasthan, where Dharmarāja is one of the three main deities, along with Bālājī-Hanumān as chief magistrate and Bhairava, who oversee exorcisms at the Bālājī temple in Mehndipur.[67] What does Dharma have to do with possession? Dharma here is Pretarāja, King of Ghosts, and interchangeable with Yama; the possessions seek relief in Bālājī's court (Urdu *adālat* or Hindi *darbar*), in which both the client-petitioner and the possessing agent submit to legal procedures while in a trance called *peśī*—in Urdu, "literally a 'hearing' or 'appearance' in court" (Smith 2006, 115). Although

66. The possession of the cannibal King Kalmāṣapāda (265–67), on whom see chapter 4 § B.1.d.i; a yogic possession mentioned below; the story of Skanda's link with eighteen *grahas*, mainly child-"seizers," which Smith handles superbly for its connections with Āyurvedic treatments of the same (272–75).

67. See Kakar 1982, 53–88. See Smith's discussion, 2006, 114–19, calling this "model of possession, exorcism, and healing . . . exceptional in South Asia" (117); 115, 119, and 160 n. 36 on his visit there and observations. Cf. the bibliography cited by Smith 2006, 628, 650. In describing the scene there, Smith discusses only recent fieldwork and his own visit, and barely mentions Kakar's prior discussion.

recent fieldwork mentions that Dharmarāja-Pretarāj, like Bhairava, is called Bālājī's "messenger" (*dūt*), Kakar does not mention such terms of subordination, and it seems, if we compare Kakar's description (1982, 64–68, 86) to more recent ones, that the court atmosphere now defined primarily around Bālājī-Hanumān has somewhat shifted to him from Dharma-Pretarāj, who in any case still holds "court" on his own (64). The association of possession with Dharma/Dharmarāja is not something that occurs only in Rajasthan, but at Dharmagajans in Bengal[68] and at Draupadī festivals, which often take place at temples named not after Draupadī herself but after Yudhiṣṭhira as Dharmarāja, or just Tarumaṉ (i.e., Dharma) for short. Smith speaks of Hanumān and Bhairava as deities he has found linked with possession in Sanskrit texts (2006, 119), but he does not say this of Dharmarāja-Yama. I will be proposing, however, that such a link can also be traced into "The Yakṣa's Questions."

Second, to read the *Mahābhārata* this way has been an Indian cultural practice. Three Tamil cults—the Draupadī cult,[69] the cult of Aravāṉ-Kūttāṇṭavar (= Irāvat),[70] and the cult of Duryodhana as the clan deity Periyantavar (see chapter 8 § B)—have taken the *Mahābhārata* story itself, each as they understand it, as festival possession scripts. At Draupadī/Dharmarāja festivals especially, where possession scenes are recurrent and cumulatively intensified as the festival progresses, the arrangements for actors impersonating epic characters to enact possession in nightlong *terukkūttu* dramas that spill over into public rituals of mass possession follow the main epic narrative closely.[71] Such a correlation between the main *Mahābhārata* story and enacted possession differs from the emphasis on oracular possession in the Pāṇḍav Līlās of Garhwal, described by William Sax.[72] In other words, these north and south Indian cults script possession differently and script different types of possession,

68. See Korom 2004; Curley 2005; Hiltebeitel 1991, 182–207 on these three Dharmarāja cults in different corners of India.

69. The scripting of Draupadī cult rituals highlights the figure of Pōttu Rāja, whom Smith does not mention, despite having reviewed Biardeau 1989*b* (= 2004) and Hiltebeitel 1988 and 1991, which discuss him intensively. As Biardeau has shown, one finds in Pōtu Rāja/Pōttu Rāja a link between the Vedic sacrificial post and painful south Indian possession ordeals linked with the goddess. Smith 1994 reviewed these books.

70. See Hiltebeitel 1995; 1998*a*; 1999*b*. These three articles are overlooked by Smith, as is Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, which also discusses the Aravāṉ-Kūttāṇṭavar cult and wider Indian variants in its chapter 12. Aravāṉ, whose painful self-sacrifice to Kālī involves mutilating his body in thirty-two places, is known to do this in the Tamil *Mahābhārata* tradition as early as the ninth century, in Peruntevaṉar's *Pārata Veṇpā*. As a prominent ritual enacted at both Draupadī and Aravāṉ festivals, it seems to have spun off into a cult of his own where, under the name Kūttāṇṭavar, Aravāṉ's battlefield sacrifice or *kaḷappali* has local variations that include worship by Alis, transvestites, and "eunuchs," including castrati, who relate their sufferings, for some including their own bodily mutilations, to his, and script their possession rituals to the festival enactment of Aravāṉ's *kaḷappali*. See now Hiltebeitel 2011b, chapters 11-14, revising the three articles just cited to tie in with a new chapter 14.

71. This point was underscored by Frasca 1990, on which see Smith 2006, 76.

72. See Sax 2002; Smith 2006, 76–77, 412 n. 77, mentioning the two cults. I believe, however, that it would be worth asking whether a sense of *dharma* affects Pāṇḍāv Līlā possessions.

yet all of them do so as readings of the *Mahābhārata*. I believe we have support here for the cultural reading practice I am proposing, but what kind of reading is it? Let me recall a summarizing statement I made on the way Draupadī cult *terukkūttu* dramas focus in on epic characters who are in the very thick of the epic's kin-defined main family feud:

> . . . that is what the *Mahābhārata* has become in village eyes that view the Terukkūttu: a royal family feud among paṅkāḷis over the rights of inheritance. It dwells on the same issues—a *paṅkāḷi kāccal*, or "fever besetting a group of male descendants"—that Brenda Beck (1982, 174) has traced through another creation of the Tamil "folk epic" tradition, the *Elder Brothers Story*. (Hiltebeitel 1988, 398)

Indeed, the *Elder Brothers Story* involves an oral epic reenplotment of the *Mahābhārata*.[73]

Let us mark this family orientation. Significantly for Tamil epic heroines, *paṅkāḷis* are "share-holders" of a "family's" holdings: the men in the family a woman has married into, her male in-laws (Hiltebeitel 1988, 9, 306). Smith twice mentions the exorcistic practice of nailing a possessed client's (usually a woman's) hair to a tree to fix the spirit there, one case in Varanasi, the other in Kerala (2006, 528, 546). This also occurs in exorcisms detailed by Isabel Nabokov in northern Tamilnadu (2000)—as it does in the Duryodhana-Periyantavar cult, where most of the exorcisms by "Duryodhana" are done for women deemed possessed by others in their families, typically for their irregular behavior as daughters or wives. Smith is cautious on Nabokov's stance (2000, 15) that such rituals do not reintegrate participants but rather fragment them "to the point of splitting them apart" (quoted in Smith 2006, 75). "The Yakṣa's Questions" qualifies on both grounds. Dharma both fractures his son's world and enables him to reintegrate it—at least as regards his brothers, Draupadī's most immediate *paṅkāḷis*.

Now as we begin to consider "The Yakṣa's Questions," I believe we can look at Yudhiṣṭhira not only as a kind of exorcist in raising questions of the Yakṣa but, like any exorcist, as a kind of detective in getting the possessing spirit to reveal his true identity. In doing so, we must question Shulman's view that the Dharma who imposes these tests is bringing about "evil" (Shulman 2001, 41–42) or a "blatant injustice evident in the reality" (58)—which always turns out to be illusory. We will also have to reconsider his portrait of Yudhiṣṭhira in this episode as unduly morbid and unknowing, caught up in a world "already coming to an end" though "he does not know this," with an identity "still

73. See Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, 45–46 and *passim* on reenplotments of various types of intensified family dramas.

hidden from him" (53), and with a "conceptual plan" that will eventually have "entirely collapsed" (57) by the time he encounters his father again those two final times. For one thing, Yudhiṣṭhira's identity as Dharma's son is hardly hidden from him, and has indeed been public knowledge since he was a boy when the great Ṛṣis came down from the Hundred Peak Mountain to announce him at Hāstinapura (see chapter 8 § H). For another, if, as Shulman seems to suggest, Yudhiṣṭhira's skill in making "countermoves" to the Yakṣa's questions is reminiscent of the epic's dice game (44), it would be pertinent that he has learned the "heart of the dice" before this encounter. Granted, however, that "The Yakṣa's Questions" engage Yudhiṣṭhira in "a cunning and potentially deadly game" (44); that he is often enough "a tormented and embattled figure" (58); that his three confrontations with his father Dharma "disguise an identity carrying a powerful destructive charge, which the self-identifying subject resists" (62); and that "[i]n such a world, one mostly fights for time" (40).

D.2.C. DETECTING DHARMA. So Yudhiṣṭhira is finally left to his own resources in answering the Yakṣa's questions. His four younger brothers have succumbed to some enchantment at a lake, and Yudhiṣṭhira arrives to face "a strange, one-eyed, fiery creature standing on a log beside the water" (Shulman 2001, 41–42). Actually, it is more likely that the Yakṣa's eyes are in some way "asymmetrical" (*virūpākṣa*; 3.297.20a), so it may not be "one-eyed" like Kabandha.[74] Also, rather suitably, considering the episode's complex boundary symbolism, the Critical Edition has the Yakṣa standing on a "dam" (*setu*; 3.97.2a) rather than the "log" or "tree" (*vṛkṣa*) that Shulman finds in the Vulgate.[75] More important, however, a good deal has gone on before this that bears on how Yudhiṣṭhira approaches this unusual father.

I begin from Janamejeya's leading question, already noticed, as to what the Pāṇḍavas did next after they got Draupadī back from being abducted. The assumption cannot be tested, but it is probably a fair guess that Janamejaya already knows the basic plot when he asks this question.[76] Vaiśaṃpāyana supplies narrative voiceover frequently in "The Yakṣa's Questions," and even though Janamejaya never asks him anything further during the episode, these voiceovers are a constant reminder not only that the story is addressed to him, but a sustained set of cues as to how he might figure out, if he is listening carefully, what is really going on. Janamejaya, and other careful listeners, will thus

74. Cf. Biardeau 2002, 1: 251 and n. 33, where this name describes the three eyes of Śiva. Cf. Hinich Sutherland 1991, 90: "The Yakṣa had an enormous body like the elephant Virupakṣa who holds up the surface of the earth."

75. Toward the end of the episode, Yudhiṣṭhira asks who the Yakṣa really is "standing on one foot in the water (*sarasy ekena pādena tiṣṭantam . . .*)" (3.298.2ab).

76. See Janamejaya's early question in the epic, cited above at n. 16.

always be at least a step or two in front of the Pāṇḍavas, including Yudhiṣṭhira. For instance, Vaiśaṃpāyana uses the phrase *Yakṣa uvāca*, "The Yakṣa said," several times (3.296.30–37) before he tells Janamejaya point blank that he has been describing a Yakṣa giving warnings to Arjuna and Bhīma (38), and all this comes well before Yudhiṣṭhira learns that he is talking to a Yakṣa on a dam (297.18). But the important matter is that Yudhiṣṭhira is never far behind Janamejaya (and other careful listeners) in putting cues and clues together. As with Janamejaya from the beginning, there is the possibility by the end that Yudhiṣṭhira has all along had an inkling of what is going on. Let us see how this comes together.

While our first listener Janamejaya might wonder from the start why Yudhiṣṭhira should tell Nakula to look in all ten directions for signs of water,[77] more reliable cues start cropping up in descriptions of the brothers' "deaths" after they have drunk from the lake without heeding the Yakṣa's warnings to first answer his questions. When Vaiśaṃpāyana describes these scenes, it is always with the perfect of *ni-√pat*, "he fell down" (*nipāpata*; 296.14, 20, 31, 38), which suggests that the brothers have "fallen down dead,"[78] but actually says no more than that they have "fallen down" or "collapsed." On the contrary, when the brothers arrive one after another to find the ones who preceded them on the ground, it becomes a matter of what they perceive, and only there does one hear that they see the others as "slain" (*√han*). In the first two cases, Sahadeva and Arjuna "saw" their brothers "dead" or "slain" (*dadarśa . . . hatam/au*; 296.17, 22). With Bhīma, Vaiśaṃpāyana replays the note of uncertainty, describing not what Bhīma saw but that "he went to the same spot to where his brothers had been felled" or "made to collapse" (*nipātitāḥ*; 34). Finally with Yudhiṣṭhira it is most intense, when, upon first arrival, "he saw his brothers slain (*dadarśa hatān*), as weighty as Śakra, fallen like the World Guardians at the end of a *yuga*" (*yugānte*; 3.297.1). But that is only his first impression.[79] Moreover, if he will be the only one to approach the scene as an exorcist, he is not the first to approach it as a detective. Arjuna and Bhīma also did some preliminary sleuthing before succumbing to their thirst. Arjuna was the only Pāṇḍava to bring weapons—in his case, his bow and arrows—to the lake, and

77. *Mbh* 3.296.5. Hinich Sutherland raises a good point about the *Devadhamma Jātaka* that can be considered in parallel. Though the senior brother, the Bodhisatta Prince, "tells the yakkha that the Sun Prince's welfare is his primary concern, the fact is that he has sent him (even before his blood brother) into danger" (1991, 96). The Sun Prince is the Nakula of the piece: the younger half-brother of another mother whose life he will choose for the Yakkha to spare rather than his blood brother, the Moon Prince. One has to wonder whether these names reflect the Solar and Lunar Dynasties.

78. As Shulman says; cf. Hinich Sutherland 1991, 89: "drops dead."

79. Yudhiṣṭhira's reference to a *yugānta* here could be not only intentionally "mere" (see González-Reimann 2002) as a metaphor but also condense a correspondence between the four fallen brothers and the four *yugas*, and thus further, with respect to Yudhiṣṭhira himself, a confirmation that the king will have to make a new *yuga*.

at least learned, before drinking, that he could not get the disembodied voice to materialize by challenging it to do so, or hit it by filling the air with arrows or shooting at the sound (296.21–31). And Bhīma actually paused before drinking with the thought that his brothers' fall was "the work of Yakṣas or Rākṣasas" and that drinking the water would help him put up a good fight (35–36). All this lets Janamejeya know that these two brothers were not entirely clueless, and that Yudhiṣṭhira will at least not make the same mistake as Arjuna.[80]

It is now Yudhiṣṭhira's turn, and our time to see how he gets past his first impressions. But let us first appreciate the powerful way that Vaiśaṃpāyana describes how he sets out after his missing brothers:

> Thereupon Kuntī's son the king, a bull among men, began pondering (*vicintya*), and the strong-armed man rose up (*samutthāya*) with his mind on fire. (3.296.39)

Here we meet another formation from the same verb *sam-ut+√sthā* that occurs in the verse describing the blessings of reciting the episode, calling it "The Great Rising Up (*samutthāna*) and Meeting of Father and Son" (298.27). It would seem that this titular usage would refer back, above all, to this very moment of Yudhiṣṭhira's "getting up" to meet his father rather than the "revival" of his brothers, as others have taken it,[81] for which no formation of the verb *sam-ut+√sthā* is ever used, although by that point all these arisings could also be referred to together. This verb has at least four other very charged usages for Yudhiṣṭhira's getting up as a king: he "gets up" to go tell Draupadī she has been won by the Kauravas in the dicing (2.60.19); Draupadī uses this term to challenge him to "exertion" during their first exchange in the forest (3.33.6–7, 53; see chapter 10 § D); he has not "gotten up" but has been "lying on Draupadī's bed" (8.49.83) wounded while everyone else is off fighting when he insults Arjuna for taking so long to kill Karṇa (8.50.29); but he does "get up," expecting to hear that Karṇa is finally slain, when he sees Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa approaching him again (8.69.11).[82] As we saw in chapter 5, it is also a repeated trope in the postwar anthologies and even in the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* that much depends on a king's ability to ponder or think for himself (*cint, vi+√cint, sam+√cint*) and to do so on his feet.

80. In coming armed, Arjuna is like the Bodhisatta prince Mahiṃsāsa in the *Devadhamma Jātaka* (Cowell [1895] 2005, 26), who, unlike his two younger brothers, brings his sword and bow. He is thus like Arjuna in coming armed with weapons and like Yudhiṣṭhira in coming with the wisdom to answer the Yakkha's one persistent question.

81. Cf. van Buitenen, 1975, 804 and Shulman 2001, 48 n. 6, both with "revival"; Johnson 2005, 329 with the even more unlikely "recovery."

82. See Hiltebeitel 2007*b*, 57, 73 n. 216. The term is also used to describe Draupadī when she rises up from the earthen altar (*vedi*) at her birth (1.55.41; 5.80.21).

Immediately after shedding tears of grief at *seeing* his brothers "dead" (297.1–2), Yudhiṣṭhira starts to wonder or ponder (*vi*+√*cint*).[83] Although using the verbal root *han*, he is now the first Pāṇḍava to use the verb *ni*+√*pat* by which Vaiśaṃpāyana has been cuing Janamejaya that the four younger brothers are not really dead but "collapsed" or "fallen":

> With his intellect he pondered (*buddhyā vicintayām āsa*), "By whom have the heroes been made to fall (*nipātitāḥ*)? There is no mark of a weapon on them, no trace (or footprint, *padam*) of anyone here. I think this is a great being (*bhūtaṃ mahat*) by whom my brothers are slain (*hatāḥ*)." (3.297.3c–4d)

Unlike the four others, each overwhelmed by thirst, Yudhiṣṭhira starts using his "wits" or "intellect" (*buddhi*) like a sleuth who has arrived at a possible crime scene, but one in which he is beginning to see the work not of just of a Yakṣa but a "great Bhūta," an even more familiar term for a possessing spirit (although it could also refer to the water as one of the five "great elements"). Yudhiṣṭhira now focuses his pondering *buddhi* "attentively" or "one-pointedly" (*ekāgram*), using a popular yoga terminology with which both epics are familiar,[84] on the matter at hand:

> I will ponder this attentively (*ekāgraṃ cintayiṣyāmi*)—or, having drunk the water, I will know (*pitvā vetsyāmi vā jalam*). (297.4ef)

Note the carefully constructed disjunctive thought by which he delays the thirst-driven alternative. Vaiśāṃpāyana now tells how Yudhiṣṭhira first "considered various possibilities (*bahudhā samacintayat*)"—that the "crooked-minded" (*jihmabuddhi*) Duryodhana could have concocted all this with Śakuni or carried it out by hidden henchmen (5–7)—and then again returns to Yudhiṣṭhira's direct thoughts just before Yudhiṣṭhira wades into the water:

> "This, its (the lake's) water, was not fouled by poison since my brothers' facial color is clear," he pondered (*acintayat*). "Who else but Yama, the Finisher of Time, could match, one by one, these best of men who had the power of a flood?" With this apprehension (*adhyavasāyena*), he plunged into the water, and as he was immersing himself he heard (a voice) from the sky. (297.8–10)

83. Hinich Sutherland 1991, 89 notices Yudhiṣṭhira's "wonder" at his brothers "bloodless demise," but makes nothing of it.

84. This is the only epic verse to combine *eka-agra* with √*cint*, not to mention *buddhi*. For "proto"-systematic Yoga usages of *eka-agra*, see *Mbh* 12.228.36, 272.33; 14.19.34 and 50; 14.30.28; and, among many narrative usages implying this sense, 11.12.13; *Rām* 4.51.1. *Ekāgratā*, "one-pointed concentration," like *buddhi*, becomes a technical term in the classical Yoga system. Also carrying along this yogic interlude is the usage of *adhyavasāya* at 3.297.10a to describe how Yudhiṣṭhira rounds off his thought at this point.

I translate the unusual usage of *adhyavasāya* here as "apprehension" primarily in a philosophical sense. That is its only sense elsewhere in the epic, where it appears in the *Mokṣadharma* or the *Anugītā*, and always describes what the *buddhi* can "apprehend," "ascertain," or "decide" beyond the agitation of the mind.[85] But it also works doubly to convey Yudhiṣṭhira's apprehensive understanding of his situation. As he steps into the water, he is, to be sure, still thinking his brothers look like they are "slain," but now he has the more specific "apprehension" that they may have been overcome by "Yama, the Finisher of Time."[86] The Yama whom Yudhiṣṭhira apprehends here should be the one he has most recently heard about in the *Sāvitrī-Upākhyāna*. That Yama is one who not only doubles there for Yudhiṣṭhira's father Dharma but returns Sāvitrī's husband Satyavan from a not quite complete death. Indeed, Yudhiṣṭhira has just heard how Yama released Satyavan because of Sāvitrī's extraordinary fidelity, and also because she answered Yama's questions. Yama had taken away Satyavan's soul. That too was a possession, but not an exorcism because Sāvitrī knew whom she was talking to.

The celestial voice now says it belongs to a crane (*baka*)—perhaps another lexeme of possession. As Dan Rudmann reminded me,[87] one of the ten Tantric Mahāvidyās is the "Crane-faced" Bagalāmukhī, who has the ability to paralyze (*stambhana*), particularly in arresting the power of speech. With the crane's yogī-like concentration, it can use this trait to immobilize fish.[88] Yudhiṣṭhira will take the name Kaṅka, "Heron," for the disguise he will assume in the "Fish"-kingdom of Matsya. This episode provides the immediate antecedent of his choice of that name.

Now it seems Yudhiṣṭhira never sees this crane which Vaiśaṃpāyana has already been calling a Yakṣa. Indeed, it is interesting that Yudhiṣṭhira may not see the crane, whose invisibility would be an added pretext for his choosing the name "Heron" to disguise himself. On the other hand, if Janamejaya's memory is acute, he could recall that near the beginning of the Pāṇḍāvas' forest exile, in a scene we shall examine in chapter 10, Draupadī emphasized the visibility of a crane to make

85. Among these other usages, Yudhiṣṭhira hears what Vyāsa told Śuka: "The mind sets loose mental experience, the intellect is the Apprehender (*manas prasṛjate bhāvaṃ buddhir adhyavasāyinī*)" (12.240.1); Bhīṣma also tells Yudhiṣṭhira, "The eye is for perceiving; so the mind produces doubt. The intellect is for apprehending (*buddhir adhyavasāyāya*); the field-knower exists as witness" (12.187.12); cf. 14.43.33, beginning the same way.

86. He does not at this point say they are "dead" (*mṛta-*), as does a line interpolated here that spoils the effects: "Even though they are dead it did not cause any disfigurement (*mṛtānām api caitāṣāṃ vikṛtaṃ naiva jāyate*)" (Vlg 3.313.26ab). Like another usage of *mṛta-* (cited above) where the Yakṣa asks Yudhiṣṭhira his four superfluous closing questions, it shows the inattentive hand of this particular interpolator.

87. Presently a doctoral candidate in South Asian studies at Texas-Austin, Rudmann was then my student.

88. Kinsley 1997, 47, 197, and 272 n. 13. Bagalāmukhī (*bagala* = *baka*) may also have a crane's head or beak, or ride one as her vehicle (193–208). She can be depicted as sitting on a corpse or *preta*, probably evoking a *śava-sādhanā* (201–206), wherein at some "points it seems as if one is trying to control the corpse or the spirit that may inhabit it," which "reminds one of possession cults," with "the possibility of the corpse reviving or becoming aggressive (204–205). In one myth, she "sported in" a "pond of turmeric" (193).

the point to Yudhiṣṭhira that all creatures live off their own "total effort," using the same term, *samutthānam* (3.33.6–7) that, as just noted, comes at the end of this episode to describe Yudhiṣṭhira's great "rising up" to encounter his father. But whether Yudhiṣṭhira sees this crane now or ever, he does not believe the voice comes from a crane. Here we see Yudhiṣṭhira not only processing information but beginning to raise questions, which we will have to examine. And we see the possessing "Bhūta" doing a typical trick of not admitting his real identity. And shortly, after Yudhiṣṭhira has voiced doubt and raised these questions, the voice changes its tune to identify itself as belonging to a Yakṣa, which Yudhiṣṭhira is finally able to confirm "having approached and stood while the Yakṣa was speaking" (*yakṣasya bruvato . . . upakramya tadā sthitaḥ*; 3.297.19cd). This prodigy now looms before him odd-eyed, fiery and tall as a palm tree. One would think that Yudhiṣṭhira has gotten out of the water, but he could also be making an aquatic approach, standing like a crane or heron himself! In any case, the Yakṣa's pseudo-crane voice has led him on to its Yakṣa apparition. What has happened in this interval that Yudhiṣṭhira should have gotten this revised information?

It seems that the Yakṣa first poses his apparently invisible and in any case unreal "crane" identity, which he has not mentioned to any of the other brothers, as a kind of opening riddle intended solely for Yudhiṣṭhira, and linked to what he says along with it:

> I am a crane (*baka*) living on duckweed and fish. Your younger brothers have been brought by me under the sway of the departed (*nītāḥ pretavaśam*). You will be the fifth, son of a king (*rājaputra*), if you do not reply to the questions I ask. Commit no violence, lad, I have a prior claim. But answer my questions, Kaunteya, then you can drink and carry. (3.297.11–12)

If Yudhiṣṭhira has been picking up clues, there are more here to consider in the voice's somewhat ambiguous description of the condition of his brothers and the term by which it first addresses him. If the brothers have been "brought under the sway of the departed," they would have been led to the realm of Yama Pretarāja, "King of the departed" (*preta* means "ghosts," "the dead"); and if the prodigy calls Yudhiṣṭhira "son of a king," it could refer to his being the son of King Pāṇḍu or that of King Yama Dharmarāja, that is, Yama as he doubles for Dharma (or vice versa). Otherwise, except for variations in the ways the voice addresses each brother after calling him "lad" (*tāta*), it ends with the very same words to Yudhiṣṭhira that it spoke to all but Arjuna,[89] posing another apparent

89. Whose attempt at a frontal assault led to different phrasing; he says to Arjuna, "Why did you come near? You cannot take this water by force. If you answer my questions, Kaunteya, then you shall drink and fetch the water, Bhārata!" (3.297.25c–26).

riddle about "my prior claim" (*mama pūrvaparigrahaḥ*). When Yudhiṣṭhira agrees to answer the Yakṣa's questions before drinking, he will say explicitly that he does not covet the Yakṣa's "prior claim" (297.24).[90]

Let us note that Yudhiṣṭhira also does not challenge that this being holds his brothers under the sway of death.[91] Rather, in challenging its identity as a crane, Yudhiṣṭhira makes several of the clues he has so far pondered relevant to his continuing questions:

> I ask you, who are you, a God (*pṛcchāmi ko bhavān devo*)? This was not done by a *śakuni*! (3.297.13cd)

Yudhiṣṭhira is also riddling.[92] He seems to expect the so-called "crane" to appreciate that he is ruling out two possibilities: that a *śakuni* or "bird" (typically a bird of ill omen) could be behind this disaster; and that his nemesis Śakuni could any longer be considered a suspect now that this "crane's" voice has spoken. Also, having already noted that his brothers still have a good complexion, he does not grant that they are dead but only credits that the perpetrator must be great and strong to have "made the four mountain-like brothers fall on the earth (*pātitā bhuvi*)" (297.14–15). Finally, it seems that he has begun to see the form of this great being when he builds up to one further question that gets the voice to reveal that it belongs not to a crane but to a Yakṣa standing on the dam before him:

> I do not know what you are doing. I do not fathom your intention (*kāṅkṣitam*). Great curiosity is aroused and my alarm (*sādhvasam*) comes. By what is my heart anguished and fever brought to my head? Therefore I ask (*pṛcchāmi*), lord: Who are you, standing here? (3.297.16–17)

The desiderative *kāṅkṣitam*, "intention," sets a precedent for Dharma to answer later that he "desired to see" Yudhiṣṭhira, and further that he came out of a "desire to know" or "test" him (298.6, 10 and 13, with *didṛkṣur* and *jijñāsur/jijñāsā*).

90. Shulman's translation. There is an illuminating prior usage much earlier in the Forest Book in a similar initiatory scene when a disguised Śiva lays prior claim to a boar he and Arjuna had shot simultaneously. According to Arjuna's description of his quest for the Pāśupata weapon from Śiva, when he and Śiva, who had disguised himself as a low caste forest hunter (*kirāta*), had simultaneously shot a boar, the hunter used this exact phrase, "my prior claim" (*mama pūrvaparigrahaḥ*; 3.163.22; cf. 40.22), to argue that the boar was his since he was the first to have aimed at it. Arjuna then challenges the hunter's claim and the two wrestle, before Śiva reveals his divinity and bestows the boon Arjuna came for.

91. The Yakṣa uses strong but still ambiguous terms such as *nihatāḥ*, "struck down," "slain" (3.297.18d), *sūditāḥ*, "finished off" (297.22d, for which Vlg. 3.313.41d has *mṛditāḥ*, "crushed").

92. See Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 247–48 on Yudhiṣṭhira's ability to discern riddles coming from such other *dharma* authorities as Bhīṣma and Vidura.

Yudhiṣṭhira has thus gotten Dharma to reveal the penultimate of his serial self-disclosures, that of a Yakṣa about to test him with questions, by questioning Dharma himself, as he will do twice more: first, as noted, after he has answered Dharma's eighteenth question, the last in the Yakṣa's main series; and finally, once again after the Yakṣa has revived his brothers. For now, the Yakṣa lets Yudhiṣṭhira know, "You have answered my questions in accordance with reality (*yāthātathyam*)" (297.62a; Shulman 2001, 54), and asks one more question himself, "But now tell me, who is a man, and what man owns all wealth?" (62cd), to which Yudhiṣṭhira replies,

> Word (*śabdaḥ*; sound, repute) of a good deed touches heaven and earth; one is called a man as long as that word lasts. And the man for whom the dear and the undear are the same, as also happiness and suffering, and both past and future, owns all wealth. (63–64)

This question is marked off from the earlier eighteen not only by the preceding turnabout. It differs in the one-line and two-topic brevity with which it is asked, in the relaxed two-verse reply by which Yudhiṣṭhira answers it, and in the further conversational tone that follows. But above all, as the Yakṣa's follow-up makes clear, this briefer question differs in having been a leading question:

> You have told of man, king, and of the man who has all wealth. Therefore, let one of your brothers live, he whom you choose. (297.65)

When Yudhiṣṭhira chooses Nakula, the Yakṣa seems surprised and asks at length (66–70) why he did not choose Bhīma or Arjuna, on whom, he points out, so much depends; also Nakula, as he says twice, is only a half-brother, a *sāpatna*: literally, "one born to a rival" or "cowife." That is, Yudhiṣṭhira has chosen a son of Mādrī who was a rival of his own (and Bhīma and Arjuna's) mother Kuntī. This looks like another leading question since it anticipates Yudhiṣṭhira's reply, which is:

> Noncruelty is the highest *dharma* (*ānṛśaṃsya parodharmaḥ*), and to my mind higher than the final goal (*paramārthāc ca me matam*). I seek to do a noncruelty (*ānṛśaṃsyaṃ cikīrṣāmi*). Let Nakula live, Yakṣa. "The king always has the character of *dharma* (*dharmaśilaḥ sadā rājā iti*)," so people know of me. I will not stray from my own particular *dharmas* (*svadharmān na caliṣyāmi*). Let Nakula live, Yakṣa. As is Kuntī so is Mādrī: for me there is no distinction between them. For the two mothers I want the same. Let Nakula live, Yakṣa. (297.71–73)

This gets us to this king's "chosen ideal."

D.2.D. NONCRUELTY. This climactic question gives Yudhiṣṭhira the opportunity to answer for once what he considers to be a king's *svadharmas*, plural. He asserts that for a king known for having "the character of *dharma*," the highest *dharma* is noncruelty, a virtue we have met before (see n. 50 above) and will meet again in this chapter. He now exemplifies it by making no distinction between his two mothers. Minimally, he sees that a king's *dharma* begins with what he does at home. But he could also be amplifying on something he has said in reply to the Yakṣa's fifteenth question, which could anticipate the last two questions that concern rites for the dead:

> Yakṣa: What is the highest *dharma* in the world, what *dharma* always bears fruit, what when restrained does not bring grief, with whom [plural] does the bond never wear away?
>
> Yudhiṣṭhira: Noncruelty is the highest *dharma*, Vedic *dharma* (*trayīdharmaḥ*) always bears fruit, the mind does not bring grief when restrained, the bond with the good [plural] is never worn away (*sadbhiḥ saṃdhir na jīryate*).

Indeed, this answer reinforces our sense that "The Yakṣa's Questions" are a subtale clearing house, for Yudhiṣṭhira has heard this virtue exalted as the highest *dharma* quite memorably in two of the most prominent of Forest Book subtales, the *Nala-Upākhyāna* (3.67.15) and the *Pativratā-Upākhyāna* (203.41; cf. 206.3). And he has also heard it recommended in Book 3 by his ancestor Nahuṣa (177.18), who was cursed to become a boa constrictor, and got to question Yudhiṣṭhira, somewhat like Dharma, before he would release the nearly strangled Bhīma.[93] As Shulman acknowledges, this is "the most meaningful set" of questions and answers among questions ten to fifteen that opened a "moral direction." But in translating *ānṛśaṃsya* as "non-injury" and seeing Yudhiṣṭhira's "chosen ideal" as undercut, Shulman downplays the *dharma* "level" of the riddle exchange: "Once the moral direction has opened up, there is no stopping it from this point."[94] I believe, however, that this is not the time for *dharma* fatigue. Question-and-answer fifteen point directly to rites for the dead in the connection it suggests between noncruelty and "the bond with the good that is never worn away"—a connection that Yudhiṣṭhira's

93. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 209 on these passages in relation to "The Yakṣa's Questions," along with 205–6 and 230–31.

94. Shulman 2001, 47. He continues: the best that can be said is that he "is summing up his life's wisdom" with a response he "will repeat . . . later," and that the Yakṣa is "satisfied." Shulman is referring to Dharma's final tests of Yudhiṣṭhira, where this chosen ideal is again tested that one last time, again in confronting death.

choice of Nakula then puts into practice. His choice thus not only makes no distinction between the two mothers but between past and future and life and death, since, unlike his own mother, Nakula's mother is dead. Like Pāṇḍu, and for the moment *some*what like Nakula, she is a *preta* in the realm of Yama. The Yakṣa now not only endorses Yudhiṣṭhira's answer but, also mentioning noncruelty himself, exemplifies it as well by bringing all four of his brothers back to life (297.74). This exorcistic conversation has rectified a seeming rupture between past and future and the living and the dead.

Yudhiṣṭhira now presses on with his final questions to the Yakṣa, quickly including the same quarter-verse question with which he stated his doubt about the "bird" to state the same doubt that he is dealing with a Yakṣa:

> I ask you, who are you, a God (*pṛcchāmi ko bhavān devo*)? I do not think you are a Yakṣa. . . . Surely these brothers of mine are fighters of hundreds of thousands. I do not perceive the means (*yogam*) by which they could be brought down (*vinipātitam*).[95] Now that they are sweetly awakened, I notice their sense faculties (have returned). Are you our wellwisher, or are you even our father (*sa bhavān suhṛd asmākam atha vā naḥ pitā bhavān*)? (3.298.2cd, 4–5)

Note the plural. Dharma is part of the whole family. Yudhiṣṭhira has finally put the question to him that we may suspect he had in mind all along. Indeed, the Yakṣa sequence itself began with Nakula thirsty and impatient, asking why they suffer in this disaster, and Yudhiṣṭhira answering, "There is no limit to misfortune, and neither its reason nor its cause can be ascertained. It is Dharma who here distributes the fruits of both virtue and vice" (3.296.1)![96] Yudhiṣṭhira's question now brings the satisfying answer:

> I am Dharma, lad, your begetter, O man of mild prowess. Know, bull of the Bhāratas, that I have come out of a desire to see you (*tvāṃ didṛkṣur*). (298.6)

Indeed, the framing of the questions by which Yudhiṣṭhira smokes out Dharma suggests that he knows only all too well the darker side of this divine father, who would be the very god to have the means (*yoga*) to bring his brothers under the sway of death.[97] Yet the extraordinary thing by this time is that, with his brothers now restored, Yudhiṣṭhira can now ask, "Are you our wellwisher,"

95. The Critical Edition brings out a much more interesting line here than the Vulgate's, which has: "I do not perceive the warrior by whom they were all made to collapse (*taṃ yodhaṃ na prapaśyāmi yena sarve nipātitāḥ*)" (Vlg. 3.313.4cd).

96. See Klaes 1975, 79. Van Buitenen 1975, 797 has "the Law distributes. . . ."

97. When Dharma sired Yudhiṣṭhira, he took a *yogamūrti* (1.114.3); see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 188.

"our friend" (*suhṛd*)? Yudhiṣṭhira and Dharma both play at the edge of death but there is no crime. The perpetrator not only lays the clues that will lead to his detection; he has come to be found out.

Once Dharma has given the boons that the Brahmin can have his firesticks back (which the Pāṇḍavas will have to return to him) and that the Pāṇḍavas will be able to pass their thirteenth year incognito, he presses Yudhiṣṭhira to choose a third boon and Yudhiṣṭhira asks, "May I ever conquer greed, delusion, and anger, and may my mind be always on giving, austerity, and truth" (3.298.23). To this, Dharma replies,

> Endowed with every virtue, Pāṇḍava, you your honor are Dharma by your own nature, and again it will be as you have said (*upapanno guṇaiḥ sarvaiḥ svabhāvenāsi pāṇḍava/bhavān dharmaḥ punaś caiva yathoktaṃ te bhaviṣyati*). (298.24)

Dharma takes advantage of the Upaniṣadic notion that the son replicates the father to identify Yudhiṣṭhira by his own name, Dharma.[98] Having done so, he vanishes in the next verse, leaving Yudhiṣṭhira not only with a confirmation of their "inherent" (*svabhāva*) identity but with the promise that "it will be" his son's future to work out what it means to "be Dharma." For the present, Yudhiṣṭhira chooses a complement of virtues that is inherently that of Dharma, encapsulating the "chosen ideal" of noncruelty they seem to share in the triple set of giving, austerity, and truth. To conclude with the obvious: if Dharma and Yudhiṣṭhira both embody the ideal of noncruelty, it would have a bearing on how Dharma made the younger Pāṇḍavas all "fall down."

What is striking in this set of values, which we shall be tracking further, is that they are validated in a royal family: one which, as it hurtles toward a cataclysmic war, has been all but dysfunctional, and increasingly so, for four generations (see chapter 8). On this point we may offer a hypothesis that connects the main topics of this section. If the *Mahābhārata* bears out cultural readings as a possession script with D/*dharma* as the ultimate therapeutic agent, we may propose that in this transformative episode, the father–son questions and answers refract narrated life experiences to bring Yudhiṣṭhira through a transference that will enable him to conduct the therapeutic role of embodying *dharma* through the traumas to come. It has tested this king not only so that he can reach a new self-understanding but prepared him to keep *dharma* at the center of an ongoing family

98. As Tamil Tarumar, this is Yudhiṣṭhira's ordinary name at Draupadī and Dharmarāja temples and festivals in Tamilnadu. This is more than just confirming that the boon is "tautological or tautidentical" because "Yudhiṣṭhira character is in any case exactly as he asks that it be" (Shulman 2001, 48).

crisis. Considering the likely post-Aśokan ambitions of this text, we would have here the family therapy of a world, civilization, or nation[99] (see chapter 1 § B).

Finally, as his memorial to Mādrī shows, Yudhiṣṭhira still keeps to a law of the mothers, whereas being "law-abiding" in the *Rāmāyaṇa* has to do only with Rāma's fathers.

E. Questionable Killings: Vālin and Droṇa

Once Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira have exited the forests, they begin to take a more "pragmatic" view of the world (as Das 2009, 78 says this of Yudhiṣṭhira). Rāma must make compromises to get his wife back, and Yudhiṣṭhira must adjust his predilections for noncruelty and peace to take charge of a war effort that will require his trust in the inscrutable counsel of Kṛṣṇa.[100] If their moral biographies prepare them to face their lives' calamities, and prepare readers to understand their responses as exemplifying *dharma* with the possibility also of violating it, each does so with some complexity, and with differences in accent. One way into this complexity is to examine the way they handle situations where their *dharma* is questioned. A difference to note immediately is that whereas Yudhiṣṭhira is among those to question his own *dharma*, even to the extent of confessing sins, Rāma never does this. Yudhiṣṭhira is prone to moral self-scrutiny of a type that we can imagine of Rāma—*if* his split personality allowed it—only after he starts hearing his adventure sung by his sons. Rather than self-exoneration, Yudhiṣṭhira confesses his part in killing Droṇa as one of four sins that most bother him after the *Mahābhārata* war (*Mbh* 12.27.4–22).

After lamenting his part in bringing about the fall of Bhīṣma, Yudhiṣṭhira admits that, when Droṇa expected the truth from him as to whether his son Aśvatthāman was slain, "I acted falsely by saying 'elephant' under my breath," and was "a kingship-coveting sinful guru-slayer" who "resorted to the armor-skin of truth (*satyakañcukam āsthāya*)" (15–17).[101] He expects karmic

99. Regarding the proto-national scope of the *Mahābhārata*, see Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*d*, on its naming of India (Bhāratavarṣa) after Śakuntalā's son Bharata. Contrary to van der Veer 1999, the editors of both epics' critical editions had fair reason to vie over which was India's "national epic."

100. See Das 2008, 78–79, citing *Mbh* 5.28 as marking this pragmatic turn but leaving Kṛṣṇa out of the equation, which Yudhiṣṭhira does not do (see verses 9–14).

101. For reasons of continuity with the discussion in text, I use Ganeri's translation "armor-skin of truth" for *satyakañcukam* (Ganeri 2007, 72). Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 223 very nicely has Yudhhiṣṭhira say, "I put a little jacket on the truth" (2004*a*, 221 and 702, with explanation).

consequences, asking what worlds he will now obtain due to that "terrible act" (*karma daruṇam*; 17ef)—for which Dharma will show him a karmic hell at the epic's closing turnabout (18.3.4).

Then he gives one verse to Karṇa: "And having caused Karṇa, unretreating in battle, my eldest brother, exceedingly fierce, to be slain, who is there that is more a sinner (*pāpakṛtamaḥ*) than I?" (12.27.18). Note that while Yudhiṣṭhira admits deception in the case of Droṇa and agitates over its consequences, he does not do so in regretting his "most sinful" part in the death of Karṇa. Yet there is deception here too, and it is more unsettling. As Fitzgerald vividly puts it, before the war, Yudhiṣṭhira had "craftily suborned" Mādrī's brother Śalya, in effect his maternal uncle, to undermine Karṇa's energy when he would serve as Karṇa's charioteer against Arjuna (5.8.25–32), and then eventually killed this "traitorous coconspirator" in his only major triumph in man-to-man combat on the war's final day (2004*a*, 88, 89; cf. Hiltebeitel 1976 [1990], 271). When Yudhiṣṭhira laments his part in Karṇa's killing, he admits neither this deception nor its seeming cover-up, but only his guilt over killing an older brother. Yudhiṣṭhira had developed a grand obsession to kill Karṇa, who, he learned, had sworn to Duryodhana in the Kaurava court, "I shall not wash my feet until Arjuna is dead" (3.243.15–20). Even before the war starts, Yudhiṣṭhira has such fear of Karṇa that his killing is the final matter he seeks to contrive just before the fighting breaks out. What I wish to explore is that the collusion with Śalya is a surface reflection of a secret and deeper counterdeception that Yudhiṣṭhira was involved in all along, with Karṇa, Kuntī, and Kṛṣṇa: that of deceiving himself. When Karṇa lies dead, Yudhiṣṭhira reveals that ever since the dice match, he should have recognized Karṇa as his brother since his feet were like Kuntī's (12.1.41–42; see Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 78 n. on other references). That is, I believe, he should have bowed to Karṇa's feet as he does to his mother's.

Last, Yudhiṣṭhira blames himself for the deaths of Draupadī's five sons and Abhimanyu. Having played his part in bringing about the killings of his family's legitimate heirs, he calls himself "a destroyer of the Earth." Note that he does not mention other Pāṇḍava sons slain in the war: in particular Bhīma's son Ghaṭotkaca, whose death he would have a hard time faulting himself for, as we shall see.[102] At this point Yudhiṣṭhira determines to fast to death until Vyāsa—playing his familiar role of Yudhiṣṭhira's prompter—tells him to get on with the life he was created for (23–32)!

One might seek to interpret these sins, as I did over thirty years ago, as falling into trifunctional zones of the type analyzed in Dumézil's comparative

102. Tamil traditions do give him some accountability for the death of Irāvat-Aravāṉ (see Hiltebeitel 1988, 321–22; 2011*b*, chapter 14).

handling of the “three sins of the warrior” (Dumézil 1969): killing Bhīṣma and Droṇa as violations against “first function” values of vows and truth endorsed by Brahmins; slaying Karṇa as a “second function” violation of warrior codes upheld by Kṣatriyas; and the deaths of the heirs as a violation of “third function” values linked with women’s fertility and the welfare of the Earth. But I would no longer argue that the sins of the warrior can be transposed to a king, or that Yudhiṣṭhira’s “rehabilitation” of *dharma* “is one of the three functions itself, over and against the forces of impurity, *adharma*, disorder, chaos” (Hiltebeitel 1976 [1990], 282). Daniel Dubuisson (1979) attempted, with I think even more forced results, to relate this theme to Rāma, who admits to doing nothing wrong: the killing of Rāvaṇa as his “first function” sin because Rāvaṇa is a Brahmin; the killing of Vālin as his “second function” sin because Rāma violates the warrior code; and the repudiation of Sītā as a violation of the “third function” sanctity of femininity and the Earth.[103] The best one can say is that these arguments give a sense of three “legitimate” areas where these two kings’ culpability has been questioned; and that they underscore affinities in the killings of Vālin and Karṇa.

Yet the killings that stand out for lowering Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira’s reputations are not those of Vālin and Karṇa but those of Vālin and Droṇa. There is a tradition of aligning these two episodes. Some Northern Recension manuscripts interpolate a comparison into the *Mahābhārata* itself in the aftermath of Yudhiṣṭhira’s lie and Droṇa’s death. Arjuna tells Yudhiṣṭhira, “The ill fame will stay long in this triple world with its animate and inanimate things—as in Rāma from the killing of Vālin, so in bringing about the fall of Droṇa” (*Mbh* 7.1375* lines 1–2). This probably reflects a tradition of focusing on the episodes together because of the similar terms used to rebuke Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira by their detractors. But the point is not just to align these asymmetrical scenes: one a martial act with an arrow shot to kill a monkey king, the other a verbal act of lying to abet killing a Brahmin; one done before the *Rāmāyaṇa* war, the other during the *Mahābhārata* war. Rather it is to see how these two *dharma* biographies (to the extent that they are such) are constructed with such famous sins made so prominent in the telling.

E.1. Rāma and the Ambush of Vālin

I must again be brief with Rāma and save comparison for the end. At Kabandha’s advice, Rāma befriends the younger of the two royal monkey-brothers, Sugrīva. An exiled king like Rāma himself, Sugrīva wants to kill his older brother Vālin.

103. See Dubuisson 1979. I say misleading results, for one thing, because with the “second function” sin coming first and the “first function” sin second, their sequence does not follow a trifunctional order. This requires Dubuisson to ignore one of Dumézil’s self-imposed restrains on cherry-picking.

But from Vālin's standpoint, Sugrīva had come to the throne only as a usurper. Without questioning either brother, Rāma hears Sugrīva's dubious stories about how Vālin recovered his throne from him and forced him into exile. Rāma then tells Sugrīva to challenge Vālin to single combat, and shoots Vālin from ambush. Against the dying Vālin's complaints that Rāma bears the banner of *dharma* unrighteously,[104] Rāma has only dubious replies, even though the text and its commentators certainly honor them. Among them are the following: Rāma acts as his younger brother Bharata's proxy (4.18.7–11, 23–25) in that princes go about the world guarding *dharma* (9), which is subtle (15). Vālin is only a monkey and cannot understand *dharma* (5, 16, 39), yet deserves this punishment for the sin of taking his brother's wife (18–21)! Having "made Bharata's command our sacred law," Vālin was punished for "transgressing the proper limits" (25: *maryādān*). Moreover, Rāma had promised Sugrīva to kill Vālin and his Truth is unexceptionable (27). As Rosalind Lefeber says, this is the "excuse that dominates" (1994, 45), not only since Rāma's word must always be "true" but since everyone knows it has been promised beforehand. Yet as if that were not enough, "Men seeking meat shoot animals that are attentive or inattentive or even facing the other way, and there is nothing wrong with this" (35). Finally, to top it all off, kings should not be harmed or censured as "they are gods in human form going about on earth" (38). We do not know whether it is Rāma's divine or human side that is speaking, and neither does he. And perhaps that uncertainty leaves him less subject to criticism. But every argument is opportunistic, as was believing Sugrīva's story in the first place. Rāma is above reflecting on them himself, and the only "personage" to have challenged him lies beaten down to submission (40–44). My impression is that this grab bag of arguments, which are strict to the extreme in their rationalizations of "punishment" in the name of *dharma*, are implicitly left open to further questioning by listeners and readers who are not monkeys.[105]

That Rāma can invoke his Truth in the killing of Vālin even in support of an ethically dubious and self-serving promise is testimony to his reputation for this virtue, on which his exemplification of *dharma* unquestionably stands. Rāma's *dharma* biography revolves around upholding not only his own truth but his father's.

104. *Rām* 4.17.18; see above at n. 26.

105. What of the question, "Do animals, and particularly monkeys, know *dharma*?" Hanumān has the same view when he meets Bhīma in the *Mahābhārata*: "We who come from animal wombs do not know the Law" (*vayaṃ dharmaṃ na jānīmas tiryakyoniṃ samāśritāḥ*; 3.146.75cd). But Hanumān is clearly being ironic, since he goes on to chide his younger brother Bhīma for sullying the forest in ways that show that it is Bhīma who "does not know the Law" (76–77), and stops him out of compassion and goodheartedness lest Bhīma menace the high-mountain Siddhas (76–80). Clearly Indian animals do know *dharma* in fable literatures like the Jātakas and *Pañcatantra*. Cf. Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 195–202 ("Talking with Animals").

E.2. Yudhiṣṭhira's Lie to Droṇa

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, no virtue is higher than truth. It is a different matter in the *Mahābhārata*, which resists universalizing any virtue and always has a contextual answer when someone asks, "What is the highest *dharma*?" There are, however, three leading answers to this question: noncruelty, truth, and nonviolence.[106] Truth is obviously important in Droṇa's killing, and Jonardon Ganeri brings this out richly in two studies—the two most important to expand our understanding of the episode.[107] But one of my three main criticisms will be that he is fixated on only this one virtue. The story of Droṇa's killing brings all three of these virtues into play. I shall explain my two other differences with Ganeri shortly.

E.2.A. GOOD MEN ARE HARD TO FIND. Karṇa and Droṇa are something of a pair, particularly in the scenes building up to the killing of Droṇa, where we will find several intensified usages of the names "Droṇa and Karṇa" (*droṇakarṇau*; 7.158.32–34; 44–45) in the dual.[108] As we shall see, the pairing holds the implication that the two together are insuperable. Karṇa has been called the *Mahābhārata*'s tragic hero, since he bears up to Aristotle's type as a flawed good man.[109] As Kṛṣna puts it after Karṇa's death: "He who announced Draupadī won by dice" was "the vilest of good men (*satpuruṣas*)" (*Mbh* 8.69.17)! To be sure, the *Mahābhārata* finds many ways to say that no one is purely good or wicked, and that some goodness can be found in every man or woman. But good men called *satpuruṣas* are hard to find.[110] Yudhiṣṭhira is never called a *satpuruṣa*, although before the dice match he was naive enough to chide Śakuni about the deceitfulness of gambling and say, "the vow of a

106. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 209–14 on these three as being statistically the most often cited among the so-called "highest *dharmas*." On non-violence, see Proudfoot 1982.

107. Ganeri 2005, 2007. These two studies contain much overlap, as will be occasionally noted, but I will cite mainly the second since it introduces new arguments.

108. See Von Simson 1968, 41, noticing this and suggesting an analogy with the single name Kumbhakarṇa in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which means the same thing—"pot-ear"—as the compound *Droṇa–Karṇa*.

109. See Shulman 1985, 35, 44–46, and 380–400 on the "Tamil version of the tale of Karṇa, which even Aristotle would have deemed tragic" (45). Cf. Adarkar 2001; Redfield 1994 on "the tragedy of Hector."

110. Usages are either general (2.53.8, cited above; 3.241.32; 5.33.94), exhortative (3.34.2; 281.29; 6.20.4; 7.2.20; 12.71.6; 120.47), cautionary (4.13.15), or simply scattered (6.50.85; 56.28; 75.17; 7.118.9; 133.19; 11.19.16; 13.11.16). The term is unused in the *dharmasūtras* or *Manu*. It has a few uses in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It seems more common in Buddhist usages. See Rhys Davids and Stede [1921–25] 2003, 87 on *asappurisa*, "a low, bad, or unworthy man," citing various texts; Nattier [2003] 2005, 223 n. 93; Schopen 1997, 178, 187, 189. Although there are numerous terms that can define a good woman, including *pativratā*, *satī*, and *sādhvī*, the corresponding term *satstrī* is seldom used. Its main use is for Draupadī. Just as she is heading into exile, Kuntī reminds her that "good women are not timorous" (*satstrīṇāṃ vaiklavyaṃ nopajāyate*; 2.70.7b); and in opening and closing her colloquy with Satyabhāmā, Draupadī says of herself that she avoids the ways of "women who are not good" (*asatstrīṇām*; 3.222.9 and 57). Otherwise, cf. 3.72.26 on Damayantī, with Draupadī listening, and the exemplary Śāṇḍilī of the *Śāṇḍilī-Sumanā-Saṃvāda* (13.124; see v. 1), whom she probably hears about too.

good man" is to undertake "honest, uncrooked war" (2.53.6–8). Droṇa is never, and I believe never could be, called a *satpuruṣa*, and neither is Arjuna.

To put Kṛṣṇa's words in context, one must go back to the dice match. As Biardeau remarks, when Draupadī raised her insistent *dharma* question after being gambled, Bhīṣma at least spoke out, but Droṇa said nothing[111]—a fact that Yudhiṣṭhira will recall with grim finality after Droṇa's death (*Mbh* 7.170.32). Biardeau also regards it as an innuendo (*sous-endendu*) that "the death of Droṇa after that of Bhīṣma brings to a close the elimination of the enlightened (*éclairé*) partisans of *dharma* from the camp where they have a role opposed to their deeper nature" (2002, 2: 254). But she underestimates Karṇa. Karṇa also spoke out after the dicing, extremely harshly, calling Draupadī a whore for having five men before ordering her disrobing (2.61.35). But remarkably, he comes to regret this. When Kṛṣṇa secretly invites Karṇa to join the Pāṇḍava side, Karṇa admits that he now "burns from the karma" of his harsh words to the Pāṇḍavas that he uttered to please Duryodhana (5.139.45), which must include his insults to Draupadī. And on the night before Karṇa takes command of the Kaurava army he even shares regrets with Duryodhana, "recalling the pain they had caused Kṛṣṇā [Draupadī] at the dicing" (8.1.7)! Thus when Kṛṣṇa says of the freshly slain Karṇa, "He who announced Kṛṣṇā won by dice, the vilest of good men (*satpuruṣādhamaḥ*)—today the earth drinks that Sūta's son's blood" (8.69.17), it is with terrible irony. But Kṛṣṇa also overstates the matter, for the terms under which Kṛṣṇa knows Karṇa to be a "good man" (*satpuruṣa*) are hardly vile. Just before Kṛṣṇa says this, Vaiśaṃpāyana lauds the fallen Karṇa as a *satpuruṣa* without deprecation: "the one who also said 'I give,' and not 'It is not so,' when sought by seekers, a good man always with the good (*sadbhiḥ sadā satpuruṣaḥ*)" (8.68.44). When Kuntī, the mother who had abandoned Karṇa at birth, approached him as just such a favor-seeker before the war, "he turned around, and seeing Kuntī, saluted her with joined palms, as was proper, this proud man of great splendor (*tejas*), the best of *dharma*'s upholders" (5.142.30). He tells her he will not do her bidding; he will fight her sons with all his strength. But he will spare her other four sons in battle and only seek to kill Arjuna. He or Arjuna will die, but five will survive. And he will do this—in his own words—"while trying to persevere in the conduct of noncruelty that befits a good man (*ānṛśaṃsyam atho vṛttaṃ rakṣan satpuruṣa-ucitam*)![112] Kuntī leaves knowing she could not have asked for more.

111. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 246, 268. After telling Draupadī "the matter is subtle," Bhīṣma says, "Droṇa and the other elders who are wise in the Law sit bent over as though spiritless with empty bodies (*ete droṇādayaś caiva vṛddhā dharmavido janāḥ/ śūnyaiḥ śarīrais tiṣṭhanti gatāsava ivānatāḥ*). But Yudhiṣṭhira, I think, is the authority in this question; let he himself speak out and say whether you have been won or not" (2.62.16, 20–21).

112. *Mbh* 5.144.19ab. Shulman 1985, 384, notes this passage, and van Buitenen's "insightful translation": "His goal is 'to persevere in the humane conduct that becomes a decent man.'"

This matter of Karṇa being a *satpuruṣa* is also invoked indirectly, and with deepening ironies, by Śalya in two *upākhyānas*. First, near the beginning of the war preparations in Book 5, Śalya, while agreeing to collude in the destruction of Karṇa's *tejas*, tells Yudhiṣṭhira the *Indravijaya-Upākhyāna* (5.9–18). Śalya recalls how the Ṛṣis cajoled the Asura Vṛtra to make a fateful pact with Indra by answering his question, "How can there be friendship (*sakhyam*) between our two splendors (*tejasor hi dvayor*)?" (10.22cd)—that is, between Vṛtra's *tejas* and Indra's—to which the Ṛṣis answered, "One does not transgress a pact with a good man" (10.23c)! Whichever is the "good man," Indra will break this pact with the compliant Vṛtra, and the killing of Karṇa will be mysteriously compared by Kṛṣṇa—as always in harmony with the Ṛṣis—to Indra's killing of Vṛtra.[113] Later, in the war book on Karṇa's killing, Śalya, now Karṇa's charioteer, tells Karṇa the *Haṃsa-Kākīya-Upākhyāna* or "Subtale of the Swan and Crow" (8.28) to undermine Karṇa's *tejas* just before his duel with Arjuna. This story tells how the crow (being compared to Karṇa) falters, trying to match the swan's flight over the ocean, until the swan (compared to Arjuna) sees the crow "about to sink and, remembering the vow of a good man" (28.44), accepts the crow's pleas for protection, but not before first reminding him of all his idle boasting before he got out over the water. Like his father Indra against Vṛtra, Arjuna will be a "good man" only in the breach in his duel with Karṇa. And unlike the swan with which he has been compared, Arjuna will recall no "vow of a good man" when Karṇa's chariot wheel gets stuck in the earth. Rather than letting Karṇa extract it so that they can resume fighting fairly, Arjuna kills him at Kṛṣṇa's prodding (9.66.59–67.24). Indeed, when Arjuna is about to kill Karṇa, Karṇa says to him, "Having seen this wheel of mine swallowed by fate, Arjuna, abandon the intention practiced by a lowly man" (8.66.61). When Arjuna then kills the disadvantaged Karṇa, it is, at least in Karṇa's words, as a *kāpuruṣa*, the very opposite of a *satpuruṣa*.

Satpuruṣa seems to have this special force for Karṇa because he is good without the benefit of high social station. Considering Karṇa's reputation for friendship and giving, especially to beggars (not only Indra comes to him in this guise; so really does Kuntī), his being a *satpuruṣa* has a strikingly analogous use in the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*. There, the Buddha urges that the householder pursuing the *bodhisattva* path be a *satpuruṣa* who first and foremost cultivates the perfection of giving (*dānapāramīta*) by giving to beggars who are themselves to be addressed as "*satpuruṣa*" when the householder cannot give all they ask for, and who are to be thought of as one's *kalyāṇamitra*—a friend who appears by good fortune who enables one to practice *maitrī*, "friendship" or "loving

113. On *Mbh* 8.69.1–3 especially, after several preceding verses, see Hiltebeitel 2007*b*, 56–57 and 72–73 n. 211.

kindness," the first of the four sublime abodes (see chapter 4) and the one singled out for universal application, rather than *karuṇā* ("compassion"), in this early Mahāyāna *sutra*. [114] That the *Mahābhārata* invests such energy in an exemplary good man of low station means that there may be others of his kind whose mistreatment and killing might trouble the conscience of a fairly good king.

E.2.B. A HINGE PASSAGE. These reflections bring us to the killing of just such a person: Ghaṭotkaca, a son of Bhīma. Before marrying Draupadī, Bhīma sired Ghaṭotkoca with a lady of the wilds, a Rākṣasī or demoness named Hiḍimbā. While Ghaṭotkaca's death is episodic to our concern with the killing of Droṇa, Bhīma's part becomes important. Ghaṭotkaca's killing occurs at a hinge in the text toward the close of the *Mahābhārata*'s seventh Book, the "Book of Droṇa," which covers the five days that Droṇa marshals the Kaurava army. While the epic has eighteen major *parvans*, it also has a hundred "sub-*parvan*s" or *upaparvans*, and the three sub-books that end Book 7 are titled "The Death of Ghaṭotkaca" (7.122–54), "The Death of Droṇa" (7.155–65), and a closing sub-book on recriminations and further fighting called the "The Release of the Nārāyaṇa Weapon" (7.166–73). As established by the Critical Edition based on good manuscript evidence, the hinge occurs at the beginning of the "Death of Droṇa Sub-book" (7.155–58), but its character as a swing segment can be underscored by noting that numerous manuscripts consider these four chapters to form the end of the "Death of Ghaṭotkaca Sub-book" instead.[115]

The "Death of Ghaṭotkaca Sub-book" recounts a terrifying night battle that is resumed even in its sequel (*Mbh* 7.129–61). Ghaṭotkaca's demonic powers grow so great at night that Duryodhana presses Karṇa to use up a sure-shot one-use weapon he was saving for Arjuna. As the episode is rehashed in the hinge segment, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna why he just did a little dance over Ghaṭotkaca's death.[116] Kṛṣṇa's tactics and evasions had succeeded in depriving Karṇa of the one weapon by which he could have killed Arjuna. Arjuna will now be able to kill Karṇa when his chariot wheel gets stuck—to which Kṛṣṇa adds that several other foes, including Ekalavya, "were one after another all slain by diverse means for your sake by me."[117] Kṛṣṇa goes on to say that he killed these foes because, had they sided with Duryodhana, he could have conquered the earth

114. See Nattier 2002, 146, 223 and n. 93; 228; 241–45; 257–59 and n. 329). Cf. Schopen 1997, 186–87, on uses in inscriptions to describe locally appreciated deceased monks, not "great saints," recognized for being "little more than 'a good and worthy man.'" See the Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's 2007 film "The Lives of Others" for a stunningly similar character and narrative.

115. De 1958, xviii–xix, 895, 916. The CE decision is based mainly on what can be considered early Śāradā, Kāśmīri, and Malāyalam manuscripts.

116. On this dance (*Mbh* 7.155.2–3) and a fuller discussion of the sequence, see Hiltebeitel 2007*b*, 33–36.

117. *Mbh* 7.155.11–29. The others were Śiśupāla and Jarāsaṃdha, on whom see chapter 13 § F.1. On Ekalavya in current discussions see Shankar 1994.

(156.2–5). Since Arjuna knows how the others were slain from being present at their killings, Kṛṣṇa must be directing his curiosity to Ekalavya. Arjuna does know something about Ekalavya's killing, since he recounted it among Kṛṣṇa's feats in a prewar meeting (5.47.71). What would appear news to him is *why* Kṛṣṇa did it. Says Kṛṣṇa,

> For your sake the Niṣāda's son, whose prowess was true, who was incapable of being baffled, was deprived of his thumb by Droṇa, assuming the position of his preceptor, by an act of guile. . . . With his thumb, Ekalavya was incapable of being vanquished. . . . For your sake he was slain by me at the van of battle. (7.156.17–21)

Ekalavya's disablement was really prompted by Arjuna, who, in his youthful training in arms, felt threatened that Ekalavya would replace him as Droṇa's best disciple (1.123.10–39). This reminiscence complicates any view of Arjuna's motivations in the Droṇa-killing episode. I take it as a warning against overindulging in admiration for either Droṇa or Arjuna, but especially for Arjuna, in what follows.

Kṛṣṇa also adds that Ghaṭotkaca hated Brahmins and that Kṛṣṇa would have killed him too for the sake of upholding *dharma* had no one else done so (7.156.23–29). Kṛṣṇa is making all this up about Ghaṭokaca's *adharma* and hatred of Brahmins, or at least contradicting Vaiśaṃpāyana's main narrative. When the Pāṇḍavas were in exile and Bhīma called on Ghaṭotkaca to carry Draupadī on his back so that he could fly her over a mountain, Ghaṭotkaca's *dharma* was underscored and he even carried the Pāṇḍavas' attending Brahmins on his back along with her (3.144.25–145.9)!

Here I begin to make two arguments. First, mutual complicities in the death of Droṇa have not been sufficiently understood because no one has taken account of this preceding sequence. Second, Yudhiṣṭhira's particular part in killing Droṇa now begins to be intertwined with his desire to kill Karṇa because of what seems to him to be the dilatory behavior of Arjuna in fighting either of them. These arguments bring me to my second and third overriding differences with Ganeri. My second is that whereas I approach matters from Yudhiṣṭhira's—that is, the liar's own—perspective, Ganeri wants to see matters mainly from Arjuna's.[118] This is the case in both of his studies, but it is

118. While vaunting Arjuna, Ganeri tends to caricature Yudhiṣṭhira, attributing generalities to him without specific attribution. Yudhiṣṭhira is thus "rule bound" (2007, 74, which Ganeri gets from Matilal; see chapter 1); supposedly, "it is . . . his particular duty (*svadharma*) to speak only the truth" (84). Ganeri tends to overstatement in faulting Yudhiṣṭhira: After his chariot "crashes to the ground! Yudhiṣṭhira will never again be taken at his word" (Ganeri 2007, 67). No "crash" is evident in the text, and I know of nothing to support this alleged abrupt change in Yudhiṣṭhira's credibility. Twice Ganeri makes Yudhiṣṭhira accountable for "murder" (71, 72). Most important, I do not think Yudhiṣṭhira believes he is being truthful when he is lying to Droṇa (79, 82), and certainly not in the aftermath, where, as we shall see, only Dhṛṣṭadyumna makes such a claim.

most pointedly so in the second, whose title, "A Cloak of Clever Words: The Deconstruction of Deceit in the *Mahābhārata*," rebuilds the argument around Arjuna's denunciation of Yudhiṣṭhira's lie: "You told our teacher that 'the *kuñjara* is slain'; this being but a falsehood wearing the truth as an armour-skin" (*satyakañcukaṃ nāma praviṣṭena tato 'nṛtam*; 7.167.35; Ganeri 2007, 72). In offering a new twist on what Yudhiṣṭhira's might mean by *kuñjara*, a word for "elephant," Ganeri will conclude that he "covers truth in a very fine cloak" (84), which matches his interpretation with Arjuna's. As we have seen (§ E above), Yudhiṣṭhira owns up to this charge of Arjuna in his postwar mea culpa; so it is not that Arjuna is wrong. But there will be more to say about Yudhiṣṭhira's own entanglements.

My third difference with Ganeri is that in favoring Arjuna over Yudhiṣṭhira, he shapes his interpretation around personalistic and individualistic ethical and philosophical questions that arise from the *Bhagavad Gītā*,[119] but do not take into account the context of Yudhiṣṭhira's lie, or his wider responsibilities as a king. To move ahead, I must thus offer some caveats and say a few words in advance on the *Bhagavad Gītā*. First, it can be misleading to think, as Ganeri does, that Kṛṣṇa's advice should always be squared with what he says in the *Gītā*.[120] Kṛṣṇa is quite capable of talking out of different sides of his mouth to different people. What he has to say to Arjuna in the *Gītā* is for a particular time and place, and is neither his once-and-for-all pronouncement to Arjuna nor his one-cut-for-all-sizes message to everyone else in the *Mahābhārata*. Thus, second, even if one grants that Arjuna gets Kṛṣṇa's most carefully considered teachings in the *Gītā*, those teachings do not let Arjuna off the hook for his actions and especially his inactions in scenes of battle. Many scholars give Arjuna a free pass for having heard the *Gītā* and continued to act on it to the minimal extent that he always heeds the battle advice of Kṛṣṇa, his divine charioteer. But as Arjuna himself will admit, even after charging Yudhiṣṭhira with the unrighteous killing of Droṇa, "Droṇa was neglected by me even though he was being killed because of my desire for the kingdom" (7.167.49). Arjuna admits here to *in*action out of the desire *for* fruits, the very inverse of one of Kṛṣṇa's main *Gītā* teachings. Yudhiṣṭhira, on the other hand, is usually left to his own resources in the *Mahābhārata* war, except when he is fortunate enough

119. Ganeri's focus on truth, drawing on the philosopher Bernard Williams, emphasizes virtues of self-preservation, integrity, calmness, and steadiness of mind (2005, 186; 2007, 86, 235)—all virtues that the *Bhagavad Gītā* emphasizes as pertinent to a warrior facing battle, as Ganeri shows—but they are not advice to a king.

120. See Ganeri 2005, 188–86, 189–90, 195; 2007, 67–68. The determination to measure all by the *Bhagavad Gītā* is most unfortunate at the top of Ganeri 2005, 190: "If Yudhiṣṭhira embodies one strand in the closely woven ethics of the *Bhagavdagītā*, and Arjuna another, then Bhīma manifests a third, the voice of caste, hierarchy, and social order." These are far more Arjuna's worries (see chapter 11) than Bhīma's; and neither Bhīma nor Yudhiṣṭhira had the benefit of hearing the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

to hear from Kṛṣṇa or from that other unimpeachable authority, his own special prompter, the author Vyāsa. Vyāsa now makes just such an appearance, still within our hinge passage, before Yudhiṣṭhira.

It is still in the dead of night. The fighting is yet to be resumed and Yudhiṣṭhira is not party to any of the information about the killing of Ghaṭotkaca that Kṛṣṇa has imparted, perhaps secretly, to Arjuna. Unlike Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, Yudhiṣṭhira begins with feelings of grief over his nephew Ghaṭotkaca, which he expresses briefly for now to Ghaṭotkaca's father Bhīma, urging him against the Kaurava host:

> "O strong-armed one, resist the Dhārtarāṣṭra's army. With the attack on Hiḍimbā's son, a great bewilderment possesses me (*moho mām āviśan mahān*)." (7.158.21c–d)

Meanwhile, if Bhīma feels anything over the death of this son, it is untold, though I think to be assumed, and presumably Yudhiṣṭhira senses this as he sends him into the fray, principally against Droṇa and in protection of the Pāñcālas whom Droṇa is destroying.

Then, "Having assigned Bhīma in this fashion, he [Yudhiṣṭhira] got into his own chariot. His face full of tears, sighing again and again, the king became terribly dejected (*kaśmalaṃ prāviśad ghoram*)[121] at the sight of Karṇa's prowess. Seeing him so agitated (*vyathitam*), Kṛṣṇa said a word" (158.22–23b). Yet what Kṛṣṇa says is once again less interesting than what he does not say. That is, he says nothing about why he engineered the death of Ghaṭotkaca, much less his little dance over it. He just tells Yudhiṣṭhira to get over his agitation (*vyatham*) and feebleness (*vaiklavyam*) and to "rise up" (*uttiṣṭha*) and "bear the heavy yoke" (*vaha gurvīṃ dhuram*), lest victory become uncertain (23c–24). Wiping his eyes, Yudhiṣṭhira tells Kṛṣṇa,

> The excellent way of the Laws (*dharmāṇāṃ paramā gatiḥ*) is known to you, strong-armed one: the fruit of Brahmanicide is his who does not become aware of what has been done [for him]. (26)

It seems something of a rebuke at Kṛṣṇa's callousness, but also a begrudging admission that Yudhiṣṭhira will not overlook the gratitude he owes to others, and particularly to Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. But the tone also registers that he knows gratitude to this pair will come with its costs, and that his gratitude to others—in particular Bhīma—must also be considered.

Moreover, if Yudhiṣṭhira's words are an anticipation of what will be at stake in settling the blame for the Brahmanicide of Droṇa, they also raise

121. Ganguli [1884–96] 1970, 6: 427: "became exceedingly cheerless"; *kaśmalam* can mean timid, pusillanimous; dejected; distressed. On *pra-√viś/praveśa*, see F. Smith's discussion of possession in § D.2.b above.

the question, "Who among those responsible for Droṇa's death will *not* become aware of what has been done for him?" Yudhiṣṭhira, who *was* present when Bhīma called on Ghaṭotkaca to carry Draupadī and who even urged him to fly low so she would not be upset (3.145.6), *does* recall what was done for him and the Pāṇḍavas in the forest. He reminds Kṛṣṇa that while Arjuna was away seeking divine weapons, Ghaṭotkaca carried the exhausted Pāñcālī on his back as they crossed Mount Gandhamādana, and achieved other difficult feats "for my sake" (7.158.27–33). If Yudhiṣṭhira was brief in expressing his grief over Ghaṭotkoca to Bhīma, he now makes clear a genuine affection for him.[122]

> My affection for Ghaṭotkaca, that Indra among Rākṣasas, is twice the affection I bear naturally (*svabhāvād*) for Sahadeva. That strong-armed one was devoted to me (*bhaktaś ca me*), and I was dear to him and he was dear to me. Scorched by grief, that is why I become dejected, Vārṣṇeya. See our troops, Vārṣṇeya, routed by the Kauravas. And Droṇa and Karṇa contending together (*droṇakarṇau ca saṃyattau*) in battle, see the two great chariot warriors. See the Pāṇḍava army crushed at night like a great reed forest by two maddened elephants. (158.31–34)

Here, we find the first of several usages within our swing passage of Droṇa and Karṇa in the dual, and coming with this triple usage of *paśya*, "see!" Yudhiṣṭhira remarks that without respecting Bhīma or Arjuna, Droṇa, Karṇa, and Duryodhana now roar in battle, having slain Ghaṭotkaca (35–36), and asks,

> How, O Janārdana, when we are alive, and you too, could Hiḍimbā's son have died when engaged with the Sūta's son? . . . in the sight of Savyasācin [Arjuna] . . . ? (37–38b)

Yudhiṣṭhira's gratitude to Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna exasperates him, and he continues to sharpen this point. Where was Arjuna when Abhimanyu was killed? Why all the fuss to punish Jayadratha for that when his contribution was small, and when it was really brought about, as Yudhiṣṭhira sees it, mainly by Droṇa and Karṇa (39–43):

> If in killing enemies it should be done right (*nyāyyo bhavet kartum*) by the Pāṇḍavas, then Droṇa and Karṇa (*droṇakarṇau*) should have

122. Yudhiṣṭhira's affection for Ghaṭotkaca may carry down to Janamejaya, who, in his last profound question at the end of the epic, mentions Ghaṭotkaca as the last person he wonders about as to what destination all the divine and demonically incarnated heroes and heroines reached "at the end of their *karma*" (*Mbh* 18.5.3–5; see Austin 2009, 600–601).

> been slain before this in battle, that is what I think. These two surely are the root of our woes (*mūlaṃ hi duḥkhānām*), bull among men. (44–45b)

Again, he repeats, Arjuna slew Jayadratha when he should have killed Droṇa and Karṇa (46–47b). And clearly implying that Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna have been lackluster where it counts most, he says, "I will go myself with the desire of slaying Karṇa (*karṇajighāṃsayā*)" while Bhīma opposes Droṇa (47c–f). Note that Yudhiṣṭhira never gets an answer from Kṛṣṇa on any of this, and seems to know he is asking him rhetorical questions, and presumably all in Arjuna's hearing. His desire to fight Karṇa seems genuine, but postured. Yudhiṣthira sets off, "holding his formidable bow and blowing his conch fiercely (*bhairavam*)" (48cd), followed by a large but unpromising force[123] and observed by Kṛṣṇa, who tells Arjuna,

> This Yudhiṣṭhira possessed by wrath (*krodhāviṣṭaḥ*) goes forth hastily desirous of killing the Sūta's son. His neglect is not proper (*tasyopekṣā na yujyate*) (158.51c–f)

Kṛṣṇa maneuvers himself and Arjuna to follow Yudhiṣṭhira from a distance (52).

Clearly it has been a testy exchange. Yudhiṣṭhira has every right to think he is being left out of some master plan. Arjuna could be thinking he would like to let Yudhiṣṭhira stew in his own juices after all the innuendos he has just heard about his lackadaisical fighting. Meanwhile, Kṛṣṇa can keep tabs but it is not his usual role to tell secrets or talk sense to Yudhiṣṭhira. It is time for a visit from Vyāsa, who sees Yudhiṣṭhira speeding toward Karṇa and tells him some, but not all, of what Kṛṣṇa has not told him. Vyāsa tells Yudhiṣṭhira it is by good luck (*diṣṭyā*) that Arjuna is still alive, having encountered Karṇa at all while he had the Unfailing Weapon; by good luck, Arjuna did not engage Karṇa in a chariot duel then, which would have led to Karṇa killing him; by good luck Ghaṭotkaca was slain, indeed on Yudhiṣṭhira's behalf. Yudhiṣṭhira should put aside anger and grief and unite with all his brothers and allies in fighting the Kauravas:

> "In five days the Earth will be yours! And always, O tiger among men, keep just considering *dharma* (*dharmam eva vicintaya*)! Highly pleased, let yourself resort to noncruelty, austerity, generosity, forbearance, and truth (*ānṛśāṃsyaṃ tapo dānaṃ kṣamāṃ satyam . . . sevathāḥ*), Pāṇḍava. Where *dharma* is there is victory." Having so spoken to the Pāṇḍava, Vyasa disappeared right there. (158.60e–62)

123. It is headed by Śikhaṇḍin, the brother of Draupadī whose main martial trait is his effeminity.

Noncruelty is the first virtue mentioned, truth the last. Coming from the author, I believe we are within reason to take this as a set of virtues concerned with what the philosopher Bernard Williams calls "the values" and "virtues of truth."[124] I take it as an invitation to make some sense of Yudhiṣṭhira's choices and actions which this hinge passage has served to frame, and which the "Death of Droṇa Sub-book" will now go on to describe.

What is striking in this set of values is that Vyāsa brings Yudhiṣṭhira back to the virtue of noncruelty. As we saw at the end of "The Yakṣa's Questions," this was the virtue behind Yudhiṣṭhira's choice to revive Nakula rather than Bhīma or Arjuna so that Kuntī's cowife Mādrī would have one son like her rival, even though Mādrī was long dead (3.297.71); it was the virtue by which Karṇa wished to be a "good man" in telling Kuntī she would still have five sons; and now it is the top virtue that the author, Pāṇḍu's father and Yudhiṣṭhira's grandfather, mentions to keep Yudhiṣṭhira from facing Karṇa, which could endanger Karṇa's promise to Kuntī. Indeed, not only does Yudhiṣṭhira's grandfather speak for this virtue, so does his "real" father Dharma: as the Yakṣa who endorsed it when Yudhiṣṭhira chose the revival of Nakula. Before any of this, it lay at the root of the curse that led to the death of the Pāṇḍavas' lineal father Pāṇḍu when he shot a pair of deer unaware that the buck was a Ṛṣi uniting with an apparently real doe (Brodbeck 209a, 174 n. 23), and earned the Ṛṣi's curse—for lacking the noncruelty to wait until they were finished making love (1.109.5–31). In relating noncruelty as the highest *dharma* to a primary context in this royal family, there is a thread here through which the *Mahābhārata* is saying something distinctive about the *dharma* of kings. For one thing, a king's family drama is everybody's family drama. Moreover, for a king, noncruelty is a family value in the largest sense. It is a "creature-feeling" that extends "across the great divides":[125] of humans and animals (as it begins in the breach when Pāṇḍu shoots the mating deer); of the living and the dead (as with keeping a son for the dead Mādrī); of those of high and low standing (in Karṇa's choice to remain a man of low station while honoring the mother who abandoned him, and in Yudhiṣṭhira's feeling for Nakula, not to mention Ghaṭotkaca); and ultimately, in the person of Dharma, of a hidden force that governs the universal rhythms of life and death.

As with Kṛṣṇa's reminder of Ekalavya, I take Vyāsa's words about "noncruelty" to hang over Droṇa's killing. If Arjuna keeps listening to Kṛṣṇa,

124. See Williams 2002, 59–61; cf. Ganeri 2005, 196; 2007, 81, 231–36, discussing Bhīṣma's list to Yudhiṣṭhira, after the war, of thirteen truth-related virtues at *Mbh* 12.156—noncruelty not being among them, possibly because Bhīṣma is past speaking about *rājadharma* and has taken up truth in relation to times of distress (*āpaddharma*). Recall that Yudhiṣṭhira asks for a reduced triple set of truth-related virtues from Dharma at the end the Forest Exile and "The Yakṣa's Questions": giving, austerity, and truth, which I have taken as encapsulating his chosen ideal of noncruelty *at that point*.

125. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 213. Cf. Klaes 1975, 81: "Ānṛśaṃsya demanded of him understanding, honest judgment and fellow-feeling."

he will keep wanting—despite the cruelty it brings upon others—to spare his benefactor Droṇa. The answer to the question of who among those responsible for Droṇa's death will not become aware of what has been done for him will be Arjuna. Kṛṣṇa is protecting Arjuna in his complicity with Droṇa, and although Arjuna does not want to see it, everyone else knows about it, as we shall soon see. Meanwhile, if Yudhiṣṭhira has listened to the author, he might find grounds to kill Droṇa by putting noncruelty before truth.

E.2.C. THE DEATH OF DROṆA. When the moon rises after both sides had agreed to catch some sleep, the "Death of Droṇa" sub-book now continues with the resumption of the night battle. Droṇa opposes the Pāṇḍavas and Pāñcālas. The Pāñcālas are Draupadī's people. Through her marriage to the five Pāṇḍavas, they are the Pāṇḍavas' closest allies. Their leading fighters are Draupadī's twin brother Dhṛṣṭadyumna and their king, Draupadī's father Drupada. Droṇa has feuded with Drupada since they were young men.

Kṛṣṇa now tells Arjuna to position himself to fight Droṇa and Karṇa. Bhīma seconds this, calling Arjuna Bībhatsu: a name of his that can mean "the Repugnant one," "the one who is averse to something, who loathes," which can be suggestive when Arjuna is averse to fighting Droṇa and Karṇa.[126] Bhīma says that if Arjuna dawdles, it would be a noncruelty and an untruth:

> O Arjuna, Arjuna Bībhatsu, listen to my word truly. The time has come for what a Kṣatriya woman bears a son. If at this time you do not strive to win the good, . . . you will do a noncruelty. Pay with vigor the debt you owe to truth, prosperity, *dharma*, and fame. (7.161.7–9)

Bhīma's call for Arjuna to override noncruelty in the name of truth is a reminder (but of course only to listeners) and reversal of Vyāsa's words to Yudhiṣṭhira. Yudhiṣṭhira should heed five virtues with noncruelty first; Arjuna should dismiss noncruelty and heed four other values headed by the truth of his martial vows. If Arjuna is disposed toward noncruelty now, it can only be toward Droṇa. And Bhīma is saying that this is a cruelty toward their mother and brothers, not to mention the Pāñcālas, that would amount to a lie should he continue in it. Here we see a deeper level of Arjuna's complicity with Droṇa over Ekalavya. Droṇa had Ekalavya cut off his thumb not only so that Arjuna would be Droṇa's best disciple but so that Arjuna would help Droṇa avenge himself against

126. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 843, 851–52; 2: 358, 514: Biardeau treats the name Bībhatsu as having this sense especially in interactions between Karṇa and Arjuna, noting its uses also in describing Arjuna's repugnance at killing Bhīṣma (2: 110), Jayadratha (2: 199), and Droṇa (2: 255), in whose case we will note several striking examples. The sub-book on the killing of Droṇa actually begins on this note. As the warriors on both sides fight on "blind with sleep," Bībhatsu says all should take time out, and both sides agree, as do the Gods and Ṛṣis, who applaud, and even the Kurus bless Arjuna with thanks (7.159.16–34).

Drupada by conquering the Pāñcālas, enabling Droṇa to claim for himself the northern half of the Pañcāla kingdom as his (*Mbh* 1.128.5–15).

Still at night, Droṇa moves away from a brief salvo with Arjuna to station himself to the north like a smokeless fire (7.161.21), and from there he kills two major Pāñcālas—a son of Dhṛṣṭadyumna and King Drupada himself—and also King Virāṭa of the Matsyas. When the sun rises, Dhṛṣṭadyumna swears he will kill Droṇa today (7.161.21–51). Arjuna's noncruelty to Droṇa has just allowed Droṇa to bring his feud with Drupada to its end, just as it will continue to let Droṇa bring massive cruelty to the Pāñcālas.

From here, let us go straight to the two lengthy chapters (7.164–65) on Yudhiṣṭhira's lie and Droṇa's death. For a bit, the two youngest Pāṇḍavas, the twins Nakula and Sahadeva, fighting along side Dhṛṣṭadyumna, oppose Droṇa and there is a "fair fight" (7.164.7–18). Yudhiṣṭhira now invokes the *dharma* of Kṣatriyas and orders the Pāñcālas to counter Droṇa, implicitly rallying them after they have lost their elderly king. Here there is an interesting verse, considering what is said before and after it about Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira:

> Among the sons of Pāṇḍu there were three non-crooked chariot
> warriors, the twins and Bhīma, and they cried out to Dhanaṃjaya. (55)

As Droṇa's destruction of the Pāñcālas increases, the three "uncrooked warriors" are fearful—as are Yudhiṣṭhira and the Pāñcālas—that Arjuna lacks commitment to fight Droṇa (63–65). Throughout the war, it is the bard Saṃjaya speaking, to whom Vyāsa has given a "divine eye" so that he can know everything on the battlefield and chronicle the war for the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra, father of the Kauravas and their nominal king. Saṃjaya thus sets the terms by which Dhṛtarāṣṭra, as first listener, would begin to weigh the actions of Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira in the killing of Droṇa, which Dhṛtarāṣtra knows has already happened.[127]

At this impasse, Kṛṣṇa now makes what Ganeri calls an "astonishingly base" pitch (2005, 183; 2007, 66):

> Beholding the sons of Kuntī afflicted with the shafts of Droṇa and
> inspired with fear, Keśava, endowed with intelligence and devoted to
> their welfare, addressed Arjuna and said, "This herdsman of chariot-
> herdsmen can in no way be conquered in battle by warfare, even by
> the slayer of Vṛtra [Indra] in war. (7.164.66–67)

127. As mentioned above in n. 59, each battle book begins with Saṃjaya's report to Dhṛtarāṣṭra on the death of the Kaurava marshal after whom the book is named.

With his bow he is the best of bowmen even among the gods with Vāsava [Indra], but with weapons cast down, he can be killed in battle by men (*nṛbhiḥ*). (1305*)[128]

Casting aside *dharma*, Pāṇḍava, adopt a means to victory (*āsthīyatāṃ jaye yogo*) so that Droṇa of the golden car may not slay us all in battle. Upon the death of Aśvatthāman, he will cease to fight, I think. Let some man tell him (*kaścid asmai śaṃsatu mānavaḥ*) that that one is slain in battle." (68–69)

Ganeri argues, based on the interpolation recognized by the Critical Edition (the "star passage" inset above), that it is possible without the insert—that is, from the CE's reconstituted text—to take Kṛṣṇa as recommending "only that Droṇa be disarmed and not that he be killed" (2007, 66). This is true. But who would take it that way? Not Bhīma, at least. When Bhīma reports to Yudhiṣṭhira that he has killed an elephant with the same name as Droṇa's son, he begins, "As soon, O king, as I heard of the means (*upāya*) by which the high-souled Droṇa might be slain, I immediately slew a mighty elephant . . . named Aśvattthāman" (7.164.100–101a). Bhīma understands the disarming of Droṇa to be Kṛṣṇa's indication of the "means" to kill him, and Yudhiṣṭhira says nothing to correct Bhīma. Arjuna, however, could—rather wishfully and, if so, I think mistakenly—take Kṛṣṇa to be implying that Droṇa might be spared. If so, it might help to explain a delayed reaction we will note on his part, which comes with his wish to see Droṇa spared at his very end. The Critical Edition thus allows us to see that Kṛṣṇa could very well be couching his pitch in ambiguous words that Arjuna could find acceptable. But Ganeri ignores an important point: Kṛṣṇa begins this base suggestion by addressing Arjuna. In effect, by making it look like Arjuna will be involved, he is rescuing him from the charge of not pitching in. He addresses Arjuna throughout,[129] but cleverly widens his appeal to "let some man tell him" at the end, since it is easy to anticipate that Arjuna will not agree to any of this. If Saṃjaya has just implied that Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira are crooked warriors, Kṛṣṇa would be urging someone else than Arjuna to be that man.

Arjuna does not approve Kṛṣṇa's counsel, the rest approve, Yudhiṣṭhira with difficulty, whereupon Bhīma goes off and kills the elephant named Aśvatthāman (7.164.70–71). It would seem that the others would know what Bhīma does, but apparently they do not! Bhīma kills the elephant, it seems, to give himself an excuse to tell Droṇa that "Aśvatthāman" is dead, unless it is in

128. The record on this verse is not as good as Ganeri 2007, 66 indicates, where he says it appears in "all except the Kaśmīrī." By no means do all manuscripts in the other scripts have this verse. "All" cannot mean "all mss."

129. At line 68, he is still addressing Arjuna as "Pāṇḍava," although some northern manuscripts make it plural.

anticipation of presenting Yudhiṣṭhira with a way to remove his "difficulty." But we probably cannot have Bhīma seeing that far ahead or being that glib about his older brother's veracity.

Bhīma says to Droṇa, apparently without others in earshot,[130] and "with some bashfulness," "Aśvatthāman has been slain"—on which Saṃjaya comments:

> That elephant named Aśvatthāman having been thus slain, Bhīma spoke of Aśvatthāman's slaughter. Keeping the true fact within his mind, Bhīma was then uttering a falsehood. (72–73)

Saṃjaya does make Bhīma sound a little crooked, but what Bhīma *says* to Droṇa is unimpeachable. Droṇa, however, does not believe Bhīma's "highly disagreeable" words and returns to fighting the Pāñcālas.

Seeing Droṇa acting "for the non-existence of the Kṣatriyas," the Seven Sages (in one aspect, the seven stars of the Big Dipper), Agni, and other celestials, desirous of leading Droṇa to the world of Brahmā, now say he is acting contrary to *dharma*; he should not continue such highly cruel karma since he is a Brahmin enjoined by the *dharma* of truth. He should lay down his weapons. Droṇa becomes downcast and asks Yudhiṣṭhira whether his son is "not slain or slain," as he had always hoped for truth from Yudhiṣṭhira since he was a boy (7.164.72–96). Not mincing words,[131] he puts Yudhiṣṭhira on the spot not only to tell the truth and to tell it now but *to say that Bhīma is not a liar*.

Attentive listeners like Dhṛtarāṣṭra could now think back and recall a prior scene where Yudhiṣṭhira's truthfulness first came under question. At the climax of the gambling match in Book 2, when Draupadī asked whether Yudhiṣṭhira had bet himself before he bet her, which she knew he had, "Yudhiṣṭhira made no reply, whether good or ill" (2.60.9). When Duryodhana called for his answer, knowing that a "no" would be a lie and a "yes" would imply one, Bhīma and Arjuna took opposite positions. Bhīma, showing deference to his elder brother, a "guru," stood up for Yudhiṣṭhira's truth, saying that as the "lord" and "owner" of all the Pāṇḍavas' merits and austerities, Yudhiṣṭhira was within rights to wager Draupadī even after he had wagered himself (2.62.32–33). Arjuna, however, stirred up the howls of jackals, which finally drowned out the tense debate, by suggesting that Yudhiṣṭhira would no

130. Ganeri 2007, 66 mistakenly has it that Bhīma kills the elephant and "then announces to Yudhiṣṭhira that Aśvatthāman has been slain." As verse 72 indicates, he says this only to Droṇa. Presumably this is a slip on Ganeri's part, but indicative of his attempted widening of the case against Yudhiṣṭhira.

131. One of the fine insights in Ganeri's studies is his recognition that Droṇa's insistence is inquisitional, and that this raises the question of whether Droṇa has a right to the truth he asks for (2005, 194–95; 2007, 84, 91): "he is 'trading upon' Yudhiṣṭhira's virtue . . . Droṇa, we might say, is trying to be a 'free-rider' on Yudhiṣṭhira's goodness. Yudhiṣṭhira simply beats him to his own game (for, as Bhīṣma remarks at 12.110.26, 'One who uses illusion (*māyā*) should be met with illusion, one who is good should be met with goodness')" (2005, 195; 2007, 84).

longer have been master of anyone once he had bet and lost himself (63.21).[132] Now, facing Droṇa's question, Yudhiṣṭhira is once again well aware of the demands of truth, but this time he cannot rescue anything by keeping silent. But if he listens to the author and puts noncruelty before truth, he does have the choice of the lesser of two cruelties. It is better to slay Droṇa than to make Bhīma a liar. Each side of this equation must be weighed. Droṇa is on a terrible rampage killing Draupadī's kin, the Pāñcālas, and is doing so with a somewhat illicit Brahma-weapon. Meanwhile, Bhīma is not only Yudhiṣṭhira's most loyal brother; *he has just lost his son*.

It is here that my second (Ganeri takes Arjuna's perspective) and third (he ignores Yudhiṣṭhira's distinction as a king) overriding differences with Ganeri come back to the first (he fixates only on truth). Ganeri maintains that Yudhiṣṭhira

> lacked the "reflective understanding" of the practice of truth that would have permitted him either to endorse the lie as Kṛṣṇa did, or to follow Arjuna and reject it. He knew that it was good to be truthful, but he had no insight into the framework of correlative virtues that go to makes [*sic*] sense of truthfulness as a good in itself. Kṛṣṇa managed to impart some of that understanding to Arjuna, but had less success with Yudhiṣṭhira. (2005, 200; cf. 2007, 74)

It is quite the opposite. Yudhiṣṭhira would not "follow" Arjuna, and it is not a question of truthfulness as "a good in itself." Yudhiṣṭhira gets his insight into a framework of correlative virtues that subordinate truth to noncruelty, which is successfully communicated to him not by Kṛṣṇa but by the author, who tells Yudhiṣṭhira he should "keep considering" (*vicintaya*) them as his recourse to *dharma*.

Yet Kṛṣṇa now tells Yudhiṣṭhira "truly" that if Droṇa fights for half a day Yudhiṣṭhira's army will be annihilated:

> Save us, honored one, from Droṇa. Falsehood would be better than truth. By telling an untruth for saving a life, one is not touched by sin. (7.164.99)

Kṛṣṇa is not too credible when he says that Droṇa can now do in half a day what he had put off for fourteen, but his subordination of truth to saving life is consistent with other passages in the *Mahābhārata*,[133] and can be squared here

132. On their positions in this debate, see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 257–59; also Klaes 1975, 45.

133. See especially 8.49.20, where Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna his own view is that "not to slay living creatures trumps everything," even truth (8.49.20). See Matilal 2002, 27 and *passim*; Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 206–7; Ganeri 2005, 193–95; and chapter 1 § C on the scene where Kṛṣṇa says this and tells Arjuna the story of Bālaka.

with Yudhiṣṭhira's chosen value of noncruelty, just highlighted by Vyāsa. Yudhiṣṭhira does not act directly on Kṛṣṇa's prompting but only after Bhīma fills in what *he* has done. As soon as Bhīma heard "the means," he killed an elephant named Aśvatthāman: "I then went to Droṇa and told him, 'Aśvatthāman has been slain, Brahmin! So stop fighting'" (102). We get the impression that this is news to both Kṛṣṇa and Yudhiṣṭhira. Bhīma then tells how Droṇa did not believe him and urges Yudhiṣṭhira to tell him the same:

> As you are desirous of victory, accept the words of Govinda. . . . In this world of men you are reputed to be truthful. (103–104)

Kṛṣṇa is still asking, ostensibly, that Yudhiṣṭhira tell a straight lie, even if it is done "with difficulty." It is what Bhīma has done that gives Yudhiṣṭhira the added urgency to do it "with difficulty" *now*. While Bhīma is simply telling the truth as to what he did, he encumbers Yudhiṣṭhira with a further complication: What to say about the elephant!

At this turning point, according to Saṃjaya, Yudhiṣṭhira's lie will have been triply prompted—by the words of Bhīma and Kṛṣṇa, and because of "destiny" (7.164.105). The crucial next verse includes what Yudhiṣṭhira says to Droṇa:

> Sinking in fear of untruth but addicted to victory, Yudhiṣṭhira indistinctly said, "King [he] is slain, the elephant" (*tam atathyabhaye magno jaye sakto yudhiṣṭhiraḥ/avyaktam abravīd rājan hataḥ kuñjara ityuta;* 106)[134]

Whereupon Yudhiṣṭhira's chariot touched the ground (107).

The translated verse is elliptical and uncertain. It would be interesting if Yudhiṣṭhira really calls Droṇa "King" (*rājan*) here[135] (alternately, the voctive *rājan* could be addressed to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, which is probably more metrically apposite, but then even more minimalist in what Yudhiṣṭhira is left to say[136]). If so, Yudhiṣṭhira would have to be reminding Droṇa of two disagreeable truths he is not asking about: that long ago Droṇa displaced Drupada as king of half

134. Ganeri 2005 184; 2007, 67, 82 has *avaktavyam* ("not to be said") instead of *avyaktam* ("indistinctly")! I cannot trace this hypermetrical substitution to either the Vulgate or the Critical Edition apparatus. It enables him to translate, "Yudhiṣṭhira, equivocating, spoke out of turn and said 'Lord, [he] is slain, the elephant." I take it that he translates *avaktavyam* as "spoke out of turn" while adding "equivocating." Yet apart from this, Ganeri still registers that it may be "a sort of mental restriction" that "has Yudhiṣṭhira add indistinctly 'the elephant'. . .in a voice calculated not to carry" (2007, 82).

135. Ganeri takes the vocative rājan as "Lord" rather than "king" (see previous note).

136. See Smith 2009, 447: "Deeply fearful of lying, but longing for victory, O king, he spoke thus to Droṇa. 'Aśvatthāman is slain,' he said; then, in an undertone, 'the elephant.'" Translating the Vulgate (7.190.55), which is identical, Ganguli [1884–96] 1970, 6: 448 ignores the vocative: "Fearing to utter an untruth, but earnestly desirous of victory, Yudhishthira said that Aswatthaman was dead, adding indistinctly the word *elephant* (after the name)" (translator's emphasis); so too do Biardeau and Péterfalvi (1986, 2: 141).

of Pañcāla, and has now killed him, while continuing to slaughter the Pāñcāla warriors. But it is the more disagreeable word that implies the death of his son that Droṇa is asking about. Here Ganeri's second approach to this episode has widened the possibilities of interpretation. Noting that Yudhiṣṭhira does not mention the name "Aśvatthāman" here, which some—including Ganeri and myself[137]—have left the impression that he did, Ganeri proposes a quite ingenious explanation that Yudhiṣṭhira's word for "elephant"—*kuñjara*, which can be a name for the *aśvattha* or fig tree, *ficus religiosa*—could be an "affectionate" or "playful" name for Aśvatthāman (2007, 83):

> On this interpretation, Yudhiṣṭhira wants it to be the case that what he actually says is that the elephant is slain, something that is true. He wants Droṇa to think that he has referred to Aśvatthāman using a word that is synonymous with one that sounds like the name of Droṇa's son. This second possibility would have the advantage of distancing him from Bhīma's much cruder deception. Yudhiṣṭhira's utterance now resembles the words of an oracle in the way they leave the final responsibility for their interpretation with the listener. Yudhiṣṭhira intends Droṇa to think that he is engaging in a rather subtle wordplay. . . . The utterance is deceitful, but it is much less clear that it is also untrue; the deceit rests instead in the surreptitious use of conventional implicature. (Ganeri 2007, 83)

All this is very clever, and not to be entirely ruled out. But there are too many problems to make it more than a long shot. First, I know of no evidence that Aśvatthāman is ever called "*kuñjara*."[138] Second, it is not likely that Yudhiṣṭhira would be affectionately playful or that he would engage in subtle wordplay about the death of someone's son. If, as we have just seen, he is calling Droṇa "king," he is being quite straightforwardly brusque and unpleasant. Further, Yudhiṣṭhira does not want to distance himself from Bhīma's assertion; he wants to save Bhīma's reputation. But most fatally, unless it could be substantiated otherwise,[139] Droṇa would not have heard the "indistinct" word *kuñjara*, and thus could not have understood what Yudhiṣṭhira supposedly intended by it.

137. See Ganeri 2007, 82 and n. 16, citing Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 251 n. 16, taking it that such a reading would imply the "possibility . . . that the reader is meant to provide it." Ganeri 2005, 190: "His infamous muttered utterance of the word 'elephant' in apposition with 'Aśvatthāman is dead'"; Cf. Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 702: "saying the word 'elephant' under his breath after the name Aśvatthāman"; Smith 2009, 477, as cited above, n. 136.

138. See Sörensen [1904] 1963, 435: in the *Mahābhārata*, it is a name only of a serpent and a minor prince.

139. Although Ganeri supplies an aberrant and unattestable text for Yudhiṣṭhira's words that might make this interpretation possible (see n. 134 above), he does not make the connection between this text's translation and the question of what Yudhiṣṭhira would have left audible. Without some such connection, the *kuñjara-āśvattha* explanation is impossible.

At least on his own later testimony, Yudhiṣṭhira says, “I acted falsely by saying ‘elephant’ under my breath” (*kuñjaraṃ cāntaraṃ kṛtvā mithyopacaritaṃ mayā*; *Mbh* 12.27.16ab; see above § E).

Whatever Yudhiṣṭhira means and however Droṇa takes it, Droṇa now hears Yudhiṣṭhira’s disagreeable word seconded by Bhīma, who also tells him that Brahmins should stick to their own jobs (*svakarma*) rather than engage in fighting; reminds him that as a man learned in *brahman*, he should know that “nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*) to all creatures” is the highest *dharma*; and says he should not doubt Yudhiṣṭhira’s word (165.28–32). Becoming dejected, Droṇa restrains his celestial weapons, and Dhṛṣṭadyumna rushes forth to behead him (46–49). At this point Saṃjaya tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra that Arjuna was saying (*uktavān*)[140] to Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

> “bring the preceptor alive, don’t slay him. He is not to be slain, not to be slain,” and so too your [Kaurava] troops [said the same]. Calling out with compassion Arjuna ran toward him, and when Arjuna cried out, so did the kings on all sides. (7.165.50–52)

Soon, telling Aśvatthāman what happened, his maternal uncle Kṛpa confirms this appeal by Arjuna, and that he was joined in it by the Kauravas (165.122–23). And when Arjuna recounts the scene amid his regrets and recriminations, he says, “When I was crying out mightily as one eager for his preceptor (*ācāryagṛddhini*), the disciple [Dhṛṣṭadyumna] killed the guru not heeding his *svadharma*” (167.41). In all these descriptions, Arjuna’s reaction is a delayed one that comes just after Droṇa’s beheading. But it reinforces the impression, mentioned earlier, that Arjuna, unlike Bhīma, might have taken Kṛṣṇa to be saying Droṇa could be spared.

There follows, as just indicated, a recounting of Yudhiṣṭhira’s lie to Aśvatthāman, who had been elsewhere during his father’s beheading. Kṛpa tells him things that he would have had to have got wind of from news crossing the battle lines. He first tells Aśvatthāman what Kṛṣṇa said:

> “Dispensing with *dharma*, O Pāṇḍavas, protect victory so that Droṇa’s golden chariot may not slay all of you in battle. When Aśvatthāman is slain, this one would not fight. So I think. Let some man falsely tell him that he is slain in battle.” Hearing these words, Kuntī’s son Dhanaṃjaya approved them not, but all others approved, Yudhiṣṭhira with difficulty. (165.110–12)

140. The past active participle could register this as something Arjuna was saying while it was happening or had already happened. At best, it seems, he would have said and done all this too late.

Other than that it leaves no doubt at all that Kṛṣṇa intends Droṇa's death, it is much as in Saṃjaya's account. Next Kṛpa goes straight to what Droṇa heard from Bhīma: With some shame, Bhīma told your father, "Aśvatthāman has been slain!" But Droṇa doubted it and asked Dharmarāja whether you were "slain or not slain in combat" (113–14)—again, not mincing words. Now Kṛpa gets to the elephant, which it seems that he was able to hear Yudhiṣṭhira mention even though Droṇa presumably did not, unless the story has gotten around:

> Sunk in the fear of a lie, addicted to victory, Yudhiṣṭhira said of Aśvatthāman, "This one is slain," saying also "Elephant." . . . Then, having approached Droṇa, he said this loudly: "He for whom you bear weapons, looking upon whom you live, your ever beloved son, he, Aśvatthāman, has been felled." (115–16)

Having heard that disagreeable word, Droṇa became dejected, restrained his celestial weapons, and did not fight as before. Of cruel karma, Dhṛṣṭadyumna then rushed and killed him (117–18).

In closing, Kṛpa seems to embellish on the bare minimum of what Yudhiṣṭhira is said to have first said, closing off any subtleties and reinforcing the cruelty that threads through the whole scene: "Though thus forbidden by the Kauravas and Arjuna, your father was slain with cruelty" (165.123). He excuses Arjuna of cruelty while blaming mostly Dhṛṣṭadyumna. As to Yudhiṣṭhira, he says he mentioned the word "elephant" as if he thought mentioning it lessened the lie. The added words Kṛpa gives Yudhiṣṭhira about Droṇa's "beloved son" being "felled" look like a lie and a cruel one at that. Kṛpa's report has fuzzy features, and is aired among Kaurava partisans.

After Droṇa is killed, Dhṛtarāṣṭra raises the question of blame and Saṃjaya reports various incriminating speeches. My position is that we should not overesteem the words of Arjuna, who is seconded by Sātyaki, a kinsman of Kṛṣṇa, or underrate those of Bhīma, seconded by Dhṛṣṭadyumna. As to Yudhiṣṭhira, we should once again not underestimate his silence. First, Aśvātthāman and Dhṛṣṭadyumna, speaking in the opposed camps, frame the discussion of cruelty, truth, and blame. Aśvatthāman, based on what he has learned from Kṛpa, calls Yudhiṣṭhira a cruel liar: "Having heard about the ignobility of the very cruel son of Dharma," he calls Yudhiṣṭhira a "flag-waver of *dharma*" or hypocrite (7.166.19); this "'Dharma king' made the teacher surrender his weapons by fraud" (25–27). Later, he says, "Yudhiṣṭhira, resorting to the garb of *dharma*, caused the preceptor who was fighting to release his weapons" (170.5–6). On the other hand, Dhṛṣṭadyumna fully exonerates Yudhiṣṭhira. Asking which of the six jobs of Brahmins Droṇa ever did (7.168.22), he says,

> Departing from his *svadharma* and resorting to *kṣatradharma*, this doer of low deeds kills us by an inhuman weapon (*amānuṣeṇa . . . astreṇa*). Calling himself a Brahmin, he summoned an illusion (*māyā*) of an unendurable kind, and by an illusion has he today been killed, Arjuna, what is improper in this? (24–25).

Yudhiṣṭhira just responded in kind with a counteractive illusion. The second illusion must be Yudhiṣṭhira's lie, which he uttered fully cognizant of the moral difficulty in following through on the advice of the master illusionist Kṛṣṇa. Yudhiṣṭhira's lie produced an illusion to Droṇa that upheld the truth of Bhīma and slowed down the unendurable slaughter of the Pāñcālas.[141] Indeed, for Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Yudhiṣṭhira did *not* lie, and to have killed such a warmongering Brahmin was virtuous:

> The eldest Pāṇḍava is not untruthful (*nānṛtaḥ pāṇḍavo jyeṣṭho*)! I am not unlawabiding, Arjuna. The sinner slain was a disciple-hater (*śiṣyadhruṅnihataḥ pāpo*)! Fight, let victory be yours! (39)

The charge of disciple-hater—emphatically set in the last line of an *adhyāya*—could lead Arjuna's thoughts, or at least those of other listeners, back to Ekalavya. Meanwhile, it begins to look like Dhṛṣṭadyumna appreciates Yudhiṣṭhira's linguistic improvisation as something that would fit Vyāsa's advice to put noncruelty before truth.

In this episode, then, of the *Mahābhārata*'s three "highest *dharma*s," noncruelty remains the noblest ideal for a king, even trumping truth in Yudhiṣṭhira's current dilemma. Nonviolence is mentioned only once, when Bhīma wants Droṇa to lay down his weapons and reminds him that he should consider it "the highest *dharma*"—for Brahmins. But in the same context, the Seven Sages had told Droṇa that a Brahmin should be responsive to the *dharma* of truth. The *Mahābhārata* refuses to absolutize any of these virtues. At best, nonviolence is a noble ideal that can be implemented only selectively, as when a Brahmin may be urged to relinquish his weapons.[142] Vyāsa could not have recommended it to Yudhiṣṭhira in the heat of battle as he did noncruelty first and truth fifth. Yet truth should override

141. Another strength of Ganeri's two studies is his demonstration that the "clash of illusions" (2007, 63) has been a developing theme throughout the *Droṇaparvan*. See Ganeri 2005, 181–82, 188–89, 195.

142. The *Mahābhārata* puts its most memorable twist on *ahiṃsā* into the mouth of the "dharmic hunter" who has become a virtuous meat-salesman in the *Pativratā-Upākhyāna*, whose assessment Yudhiṣṭhira hears in the forest: "Surely what was said by those astonished men of old was, 'Nonviolence!' Who in this world does not harm living beings? . . . no one in the world. . . . Even ascetics devoted to nonviolence surely do violence, although by their effort it may be lessened" (3.199.28–29). After the war, Arjuna agrees with this, telling Yudhiṣṭhira that nonviolence is not only impossible but delusory (12.15.20–28).

noncruelty for the pure Kṣatriya Arjuna where noncruelty allows him to neglect his vows and evade battle out of his "repugnance" to fight his guru.

The tensions between these values continue to unfold as each of the three oldest Pāṇḍavas has his final say about the killing of Droṇa. Arjuna leads off, charging Yudhiṣṭhira, "The teacher was told a deceit by you, honored one, as a means of gaining the kingdom. Done by one who knows *dharma*, this is a very great *adharma*" (7.167.33). The interpolated verse cited earlier in which Arjuna compares Yudhiṣṭhira's lie to Rāma's killing of Vālin comes here, after which Arjuna continues with the charge that Ganeri features in his second article:

> You told our teacher that "the *kuñjara* is slain"; this being but a falsehood wearing the truth as an armour-skin. . . . It was even a disciple who, casting off the eternal *dharma*, slew his own preceptor who was filled with affection for him, while indeed the preceptor was possessed by grief and unwilling to fight. . . . When I was crying out mightily as one eager for his preceptor, the disciple killed the guru not heeding his *svadharma*. When most of our lives has gone by and the remainder is shorter, this great *adharma* done is now its disfigurement. Always like a father in goodheartedness, he was surely like a father according to *dharma*. (41–43)

Arjuna has a kind of tunnel vision: Droṇa's goodheartedness may extend to the Pāṇḍavas but is hardly to be credited toward the Pāñcālas, not to mention Ekalavya, whom Arjuna was not long ago reminded of. Despite going on to note the great wealth Droṇa attained while serving the Kauravas (45), Arjuna says he laid down his weapons like a Muni or silent sage (50).

When no one said a word, unpleasant or pleasant, Bhīma answered Arjuna "as if in derision (*utsmayann iva*),"[143] debunking him for speaking about *dharma* "like a Muni" himself, "like a Brahmin of rigid vows whose weapons are laid down" (168.1–3). Bhīma implies that Arjuna is identifying too much with Droṇa, who was not a forest Muni but an urban hanger-on[144] and was compromised when he was in the forest training Arjuna—probably another reminder of Ekalavya. This impression grows as Bhīma further reminds Arjuna that, as a Kṣatriya, he should rescue others from wounds rather than dwell on noncruelty, and show *dharma*, fame, and prosperity to those who are good (4):

> What good luck, unfallen one, that your intellect is constantly on noncruelty! But while you were conducting yourself according to

143. Bhīma is "angry" (*kruddaḥ*) here; this is more than just a "smile." See MW 183 for *ut-smi* and derivatives.

144. See Biardeau 1981*a*, 83–87 on Droṇa's greed and "search for riches" first in the Pañcāla capital, then with the Kauravas.

> *dharma*, the kingdom was seized in accord with *adharma*, and Draupadī, roughly handled, was led into the assembly by enemies, and we were exiled to the woods. . . . Formerly you said, "We will go to battle to the utmost and strive according to our power." But today you reproach us. You do not desire to know your *svadharma* or even your own deceitful speech. . . . A law-abiding man, you profoundly misunderstand *adharma*. (5–16)

Bhīma accuses Arjuna of *varṇa*-confusion like Droṇa's. If he is the impeccable Kṣatriya he is supposed to be, he is, as before, not one to be putting noncruelty before the truth of his word in battle. But now the contrast is not with Yudhiṣṭhira but with Droṇa as a mock-Muni.

Arjuna is rarely mocked like this. All became silent while he cast sidelong glances and sighed tearfully (7.169.7). "Likewise, Yudhiṣṭhira, the twins, Kṛṣṇa and others were very ashamed" (8).

There seems to be a fine line separating what Saṃjaya says on his own because he is speaking in the pro-Kaurava orbit of Dhṛtarāṣṭra—for example, that Dhṛṣṭadyumna's words and deeds are cruel and crooked—and what he reports as "fact" accessible through his divine eye, which would include the spoken views of others. After Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Sātyaki nearly come to blows, Yudhiṣṭhira finally speaks for the first time since whispering "*kuñjara*." As Aśvatthāman releases the terrible fiery Nārāyaṇa weapon, Yudhiṣṭhira airs his sense of the recent recriminations. Seeing his fighters listless, in despairing words that brim with stinging rebukes for what he has had to hear particularly from Arjuna, and also with seeming sarcasm for Kṛṣṇa who has likewise said nothing since he urged the lie:

> Dharma's son said, "Fly away with the Pāñcāla army, Dhṛṣṭadyumna. Sātyaki, you too go to your homes, surrounded by the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas. *Dharma*-souled Vāsudeva will also make himself safe. He is competent to instruct the world, what more himself! . . . Let the desire (*kāma*) of this Bībhatsu succeed quickly with regard to me. The preceptor of fine conduct has been felled by me in battle; . . . he who, with his knowledge of the Brahma-weapon, scrupled not to fell the Pāñcālas and their roots, who had exerted themselves for my victory; . . . he who did supreme high goodheartedness to us—(now that he is) slain, for his sake I will die with my kinsmen."
> (170.26–36)

Yudhiṣṭhira slants Arjuna for his unique accessibility to Kṛṣṇa, who leaves Yudhiṣṭhira so often in the dark. He accepts fault in bringing about the death

of this guru, but paints Droṇa's "goodheartedness" to the Pāṇḍavas, which Arjuna had so touted, as a fraud. All the while pointedly saying that the current impasse is in some way an outcome of Arjuna's desire, he recalls matters that would sting Arjuna most: Droṇa's parts in killing Arjuna's son Abhimanyu and in suiting up Duryodhana in invulnerable armor so that he could protect Jayadratha, the ally blamed for Abhimanyu's killing, whom Arjuna had vowed to kill in a day or enter fire if he failed (170.31–33). In mentioning Droṇa's cruelties, however, Yudhiṣṭhira ties them back only to Book 2, recalling, as noted, that Droṇa said nothing as the Kauravas were about to lead Draupadī into slavery (32). In *not* recalling Droṇa's and Arjuna's cruelty to Ekalavya, which occurred in Book 1, Yudhiṣṭhira could be subordinating truth to noncruelty even in what he does *not* say to his harsh younger brother.

Finally, as Arjuna duels with Aśvatthāman, it is Arjuna's turn to say surprising things, insulting Aśvatthāman while vaunting Dhṛṣṭadyumna. Hearing about this, Dhṛtarāṣṭra recalls that Arjuna and Aśvatthāman have great respect and affection for each other, and asks, "Why then these never before said harsh words from Bībhatsu?" (7.172.8ab). Saṃjaya's main answer is that Arjuna was

> pierced to the vitals by the words of Yudhiṣṭhira, and when an inner breaking was produced, having been reminded of that grief, lord, Bībhatsu's wrath arose from that grief as had never been before. Therefore, he addressed Droṇa's son unworthily, coarsely, disagreeably, the preceptor's son who was worthy of honor, harshly like a lowly man. (10–12).

Arjuna is brought to behave as a lowly man, a *kāpuruṣa*, just as we have seen that he will do again two days later, at least according to Karṇa, when he shoots Karṇa from advantage. We would seem to need our chain of displacements going back to Ekalavya to explain how it is that Yudhiṣṭhira's present words bring such lowly words from Arjuna, who was earlier so eager to denounce *him*.

F. Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira: Some Comparative Points

In being reminded of Karṇa's charge that Arjuna would be a "lowly man" in shooting him at a disadvantage, the thought might have recrossed some readers' minds that we should go back to comparing the sins of Rāma and Arjuna rather than those of Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira. The killings of Vālin and Karṇa are certainly an iconic and structural pair. Both are deemed lowly when shot at a

disadvantage. The opponents in each case have the same divine parents, but crisscrossed: Arjuna and Vālin are sons of Indra; Karṇa and Sugrīva are sons of Sūrya. An incarnation of Viṣṇu in each case provides the justifications. Whatever else that comparison might lead us to by itself, it is illuminating for the mirror it holds up to the comparison of Rāma with Yudhiṣṭhira.

One thing it tells us is that both epics take pains not to portray either king as a lowly man. Another is that the reasons for sensing affinities between these acts of Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira lie not in the acts themselves but in the language used in accusing them. According to their detractors, each is a *dharmadhvajin*, one who bears the banner of *dharma* unrighteously (*Rām* 4.17.18; *Mbh* 7.166.19). A third is that unlike either Yudhiṣṭhira or Arjuna, only Rāma feels called upon to defend himself. Fourth, only Yudhiṣṭhira admits guilt, that is, admits himself accountable as a sinner. To do something with difficulty is to do so having considered the consequences and been willing to suffer them. Whether the word "elephant" came out impulsively because of an inner inclination to truth, or because he improvised an illusion of truth that satisfied some verbal scruple, he can be said to have recognized the difficulty and put noncruelty before truth, as the author had told him to do.

Rāma, of course, does not put noncruelty above truth or have his words ever challenged. He also gets away with numerous cruelties unchallenged, unless it is by Vālmīki and Sītā, or vainly by Vālin; and he is never called upon to weigh truth against these cruelties. It just trumps them. We hear about him as he hears about himself, only from Vālmīki. With Yudhiṣṭhira, his cruelties and noncruelties are for all to weigh, including himself. If extenuating circumstances should lighten Yudhiṣṭhira's sentence, the loss of his chariot's air cushion and a brief agonizing look at Hell before he finally reaches Heaven at life's end seem just about right. I assume that these are effects of an "author function" that can be distinguished from a "bardic function."

With Yudhiṣṭhira we have a rare kind of man in the Indian epics. The prevailing idea, which Rāma and Arjuna, or better, Rāma, Arjuna, and Kṛṣṇa, exemplify to the hilt, is that the knowing Self knows itself not to be accountable for staining acts. The compound "of stainless acts," reserved for men, is used mainly for these three characters, and for Rāma in both epics. What is striking about Yudhiṣṭhira is that even though he hears of this no-fault clause in stories told to him while he is in the forest,[145] when it comes to thinking through matters in terms of *dharma*, as is his wont, he seems to have no use for it. Yudhiṣṭhira's *dharma* biography comes from within. Unlike Rāma's and like the Buddha's, it is one of ongoing reflection.

145. Once again, it is in the *Nala-* (3.74.16) and *Pativratā-* (3.198.51) *Upākhyānas*. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 235.

10

Draupadī and Sītā

Dharmapatnīs of Two Different Kinds

This chapter will compare Draupadī and Sītā as *dharmapatnīs*, "lawful wives." As we saw in chapter 8, the term occurs where Satyavatī's "fisher-king" father secures the fateful agreement that allows her marriage with Śaṃtanu and defines the "terrible" double renunciation of Bhīṣma. And it was used several times during the frantic last exchanges between Pāṇḍu and his two *dharmapatnīs* Kuntī and Mādrī. As in these cases, "lawful wife" is used for Draupadī and Sītā in situations of duress. Indeed, so are other terms that might be thought to fall naturally under the heading of *strīdharma*, but are likewise situational to *dharma* in times of distress, as we shall see with the epics' rare references to women's *svadharma*.[1] More than any other term, though, Draupadī and Sītā's status as *dharmapatnīs* throws into relief how they are jeopardized by what we are getting to know as these epics' divine plans. In Draupadī's case, her polyandry makes her status as a "lawful wife" uniquely problematic, and the Ṛṣi Nārada is the first to call her a *dharmapatnī* (1.200.17b) when he comes to tell the Pāṇḍavas they need a rule of rotation to keep them from fighting over her—which leads him to tell them the *Sunda-Upasunda Subtale* about the two demon brothers who killed each other over a woman fashioned by the

1. See § C. The same may be said of usages of *pativratā* (a woman "avowed to her husband," a faithful wife), which tends to be used when someone questions a woman's fidelity, seeks to regulate it, or offers reassurances that it is secure—a point I owe to Vishwa Adluri (personal communication), but on which see also Dhand 2008, 31–32, 125, 160–80, 190–95; Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*d*.

gods to divide them.[2] Next, Dhṛtarāṣṭra uses the term to fault Duryodhana just after Draupadī has been abused at the dice match (2.63.5), and Draupadī, soon finding herself in the forest, tells Kṛṣṇa, "I detest the Pāṇḍavas, those great strongmen in war, who looked on while their illustrious *dharmapatnī* was molested" (3.13.58)! Soon thereafter, Saṃjaya tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra, "The Paṇḍavas of boundless luster have been possessed by fury ever since they saw Draupadī, their illustrious *dharmapatnī*, brought into the assembly hall" (3.46.20). As to Sītā, she is first called "Rāma's illustrious *dharmapatnī*" by the jealous and vengeful Rākṣasī Śūrpaṇakhā, who reports on Sītā's beauty to spur Rāvaṇa to desire her (3.32.14). Sītā then speaks of herself in this manner while Rāvaṇa is abducting her (3.47.28), as do the vulture Jaṭāyus when he tries to defend her (3.48.5) and Hanumān when he is trying to find her in Laṅkā (5.7.68), and again when Hanumān goes to bring Sītā before her unexpectedly surly husband after Rāvaṇa and Laṅkā have fallen (6.101.39). These instances, which virtually exhaust the epics' usage of this term for Draupadī and Sītā, surround passages we shall compare at the end of this chapter, where each heroine speaks for herself about the revolution that has changed her life. As we shall see from the stage-setting stories of their births and marriages, they become "lawful wives" in very different ways.

I will maintain that these contrasts are intentional. In the *Mahābhārata*, Draupadī is contrasted to Sītā directly when she and the Pāṇḍavas sit down to hear the *Rāmopākhyāna*. As mentioned in chapter 9, I regard the *Rāmopākhyāna* as one of Vālmīki's sources.[3] This chapter will be able to put some new evidence behind that idea, for we will be able to see some of Vālmīki's innovations in constructing a purposively different kind of heroine. My springboard to thinking about this contrast has been a title given to a forthcoming collection of my essays centered on Draupadī in the epic and in her cult in Tamilnadu: *When the Goddess Was a Woman*.[4] That title can alert us to one of the first things that distinguish the two heroines. Much as the *Mahābhārata* poet Vyāsa wants us to understand that Draupadī lives her life as a woman, her power and the troubles she and others experience around that power can be said to relate to divine mysteries that work through her human body arising from the fact that she is the incarnation of the goddess Śrī, "Prosperity." As far as the two epics are concerned, the Goddess becomes a woman prominently only in the *Mahābhārata*. As we saw in chapter 8 with Gaṅgā, Draupadī was not the first goddess to become a woman in that epic. Indeed, one might even say it runs in the family. But she is the one at the heart of the story.

Sītā is a different kind of woman. Brahmā does finally tell Rāma that Sītā is Lakṣmī when he discloses Rāma's divine identity to him after Sītā has gone

2. See chapter 9 nn. 41 and 62.

3. See chapter 9 n. 2 and Hiltebeitel 2009*a*.

4. I thank Vishwa Adluri, one of the book's two editors, for conceiving of this title (see Hiltebeitel 2011*b*).

through her fire ordeal (*Rām* 6.105.25). But he leaves any implications unstated.[5] In the story of Rāma and his brothers being incarnations of Viṣṇu, there is nothing about Sītā (*Rām* 1.14–17). The *Rāmāyaṇa* offers no myth linking the births of Sītā and Rāma such as Vyāsa himself narrates in the *Pañcendra-Upākhyāna* to link the divine births of Draupadī and the Pāṇḍavas with Viṣṇu's double incarnation as Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma (*Mbh* 1.189). Sītā is usually just said to be "*like* Śrī,"[6] and no more than that. Vālmīki wants us to understand that even though Sītā's life is equally caught up in divine mysteries, and that these might even suggest that she is a goddess, she is first and foremost a very lovely woman. In comparing the two heroines, I sometimes tell students that whereas Draupadī is a force, "a real man-eater" as a 1980s song puts it,[7] Sītā is the kind of woman I would like to talk to.[8] And in fact, that can get us to what is most distinctive about Sītā. It is not that divine mysteries inhere in her birth but that poetic mysteries arise from her relation to the poet. For whereas Vyāsa never (at least as far as I can recall) says a direct word to Draupadī, Vālmīki composed his poem when Sītā was living in his hermitage after Rāma banished her. There she gave birth to Rāma's twin sons Kuśa and Lava. I dare say the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is unimaginable without our imagining these unreported conversations between the heroine and the poet, who was not only her refuge during her banishment but, one could say, the midwife of the poem and of her children.[9]

As in chapter 9, we will be able to see these differences best through being aware of what the two epics have in common, which emerges from their similar archetypal structuring. But were we to tour the frames and substories or take the same Book-by-Book approach as we did in raising the question of biography in chapter 9, we would find that these structuring features are not as conducive to thinking about the two heroines biographically as they are for their two royal husbands. Vālmīki gives unparalleled prominence to Sītā in the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s frame story. Let us recall that he puts "the great adventure of Sītā"

5. Brahmā could connect it here with his questioning Rāma's treatment of Sītā in putting her through her fire ordeal, but he does not. See Sutherland Goldman 2001, 394 n. 30 on other intimations in the *Rāmāyaṇa* that Sītā is divine. But her divinity is not foregrounded there as it is, for example, in the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* or Tulsidas's *Rāmcaritmanas*.

6. Sītā is compared with Śrī for instance, at *Rām* 1.76.17; 2.39.12; 5.14.6; 6.5.12;101.43.

7. "Maneater," words by Daryl Hall, John Oates, and Sara Allen, music and 1982 recording by Hall and Oates. Its refrain: "(Oh-oh, here she comes) Watch out boy she'll chew you up, (Oh-oh, here she comes) She's a maneater." Vaiśaṃpāyana compares Draupadī to a tigress (*vyāghravadhūm iva*; *Mbh* 3.248.17d) being approached by a jackal when Jayadratha sends his henchman to find out who she is before he abducts her in the forest; see Hiltebeitel 1991*b*, 508.

8. What I am saying here is meant to be a different way of saying something that emerges from Richman 2001 by focusing on the tradition of "Questioning *Rāmāyaṇas*," particularly the article by David Shulman on Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmacarita*, which imagines Rāma being able to talk to Sītā even after her banishment and last ordeal (see also Shulman 2001, 255–92). See also Hess 2001 on Hindi *praśna* pamphlets which collect "questions" people ask of the Tulsi *Rāmāyaṇ*, and Erndl 1991 imagining Sītā conversing with Śūrpaṇakhā.

9. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 320: "Vālmīki helped her raise these boys, who are called *his* children, 'the children of the Muni'" (*munidārakau*; *Rām* 7.84.9d, 17d, and 19d).

on a par with that of Rāma, and that the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s Preamble closes with Rāma listening to his sons sing their story. Nothing makes Draupadī central to the *Mahābhārata* frontmatter in any way comparable to Yudhiṣṭhira being described as the trunk of the great tree of *dharma*. Yet conversely, although Sītā gets to tell a few sidestories, the *Rāmāyaṇa* presents nothing like Draupadī's engagement with substories. Draupadī gets to listen to almost as many as Yudhiṣṭhira does, but only a few of them—the "mirror stories," maybe the *Bhaṅgāśvana-Upākhyāna*, where Yudhiṣṭhira asks Bhīṣma who gets more sexual pleasure, men or women (13.12.1), and Bhīṣma says women[10]—benefit her directly, and she never has to answer a Yakṣa's questions about them.

Insofar as the two epics share a common skein, it clearly unfolds from the men's adventures. The two female leads get more staggered attention at different points and with more contrasting accents. Draupadī has children early; Sītā very late. The defining outrage against Draupadī occurs in Book 2, against Sītā in Book 3. From the end of war to the ends of their lives, the differences increase. Though the presentation of their lives is more consecutive than Karṇa's, like him, each heroine is "the subject of a fragmented countertext . . . that the poets leave readers to piece together from segments where she is part of the main story and patches where she is the subject of selected memories—not only others' memories but her own."[11] The two epics tell us enough about Karṇa or their chief heroines to allow a scholar, novelist, or filmmaker to reconstruct their biographies.[12] But that is not their purpose. Taking another tack, I will thus turn to a four-part comparison between Draupaḍī and Ṣītā involving first, their births; second, their marriages; third, what they have to say, each at a rare moment, about their *svadharma*; and fourth, what they make of their worst situations.

A. Family Background, Birth, and Childhood

Draupadī and Sītā begin their lives as extraordinary females who are "*ayonijā*," "not born from a womb," with both, it seems, being born from the earth. Draupadī takes birth from a Vedic earthen altar called a *vedi*; Sītā from a "furrow" (*sītā*), from which she gets her name.

Regarding Draupadī's birth, there is a widespread popular conception that she was born from fire, not the earth; but that is apparently not so in the

10. On the "mirror stories" in Book 3 being held up to the forest predicaments of Draupadī and the Pāṇḍavas, see chapter 9 at n. 41. I speculate on Draupadī as listener to the *Bhaṅgāśvana-Upākhyāna* in Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 49.

11. I switch the pronouns in this otherwise quoted passage from Hiltebeitel 2007*b*, 27. Cf. Sutherland Goldman's fine discussions of "gendered spaces" in the text (2001, 2004, 2009).

12. Ray 1995 and Divakaruni 2008 are two novels about Draupadī; Nina Paley's "Sītā Sings the Blues" is a 2009 film about Sītā. "Karnan" with Shivaji Ganesan is a celebrated 1963 Tamil film about Karṇa.

Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*. Although *vedi* is a general term for an "altar" that could have a fire on it, the kind of *vedi* Draupadī is born from is an earthen altar with an inner curvature said to resemble a woman's waist. Sacrificial implements can be placed on this kind of *vedi* while they are not in use on top of a strew of sacred grass, but it would not be a fire altar. When Draupadī is born from a *vedi* she is compared to one of this kind, which has features of a woman's torso, tapering at the middle between wider "shoulders" and "hips":

> . . . a Pāñcālī girl arose from the middle of the *vedi*,
> well-apportioned with limbs one ought to see, having a *vedi*'s waist,
> a delight to the mind. . . . (*Mbh* 1.155.41)

The *Mahābhārata* poets are, however, rather indirect in telling us about the rite that produces Draupadī (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 186–89). The few things we know about it include that her father, king Drupada of Pañcāla, wants a son who will avenge him against his Brahmin enemy Droṇa, who took half his kingdom (1.128.1–4; 154.20–22; see chapter 9). His intention is to kill Droṇa, so this would require a nefarious rite since Brahminicide is the worst of sins. Drupada must thus go to considerable trouble to find priests willing to perform it (155.1–30). The rite begins when Drupada pronounces his lethal purpose; and "at the end of the offering" (*havanasyānte*) his queen is summoned but told the rite is efficacious no matter what she does. Immediately, a fire-hued son, incarnation of the fire god Agni, rises armed from a sacrificial fire and rides forth on a chariot. As the thrilled Pāñcālas roar approval, a heavenly voice announces that the boy, Dhṛṣṭadyumna, will kill Droṇa (33–40). The rite's purpose has thus been fulfilled. But immediately, continuing from the verse mentioned above that begins, "And also a Pāñcālī girl arose from the middle of the *vedi*," Drupada, beyond the stated end (purpose, completion) of his rite, also gets a daughter:

> Dark, her eyes like lotus petals, hair dark-bluish and curling, having taken human form clearly possessing the hue of an immortal, her fragrance, like that of the blue lotus, wafted for a league. . . . And just as that full-hipped one was born, a disembodied voice said: "Best among all women, Kṛṣṇā will lead the warrior class to destruction. The fair-waisted one will in time accomplish the work of the gods (*surakāryam*)." (155.42–45)

The poet goes on to say that she has a fire-like radiance, but never that she was born from fire. Draupadī comes *gratis*.[13] In being born to "accomplish the

13. Brodbeck 2009*b*, 153–54 seems to agree with Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 181–92, on the basis of a parallel *Mahābhārata* narrative, that Draupadī's birth is "superfluous." But Brodbeck (2009*a*, 65–66) implies that a more

work of the gods," the purpose behind her human birth is not human but divine. As with her brother's birth, it is an outcropping of the *Mahābhārata*'s divine plan.

Just as it took a sacrificial rite to produce Draupadī, commentators on the *Rāmāyaṇa* suggest that Sītā's birth also occurred as an outcome of sacrificial activity. Where Sītā's father Janaka first describes her birth, the word translated as "clearing" (*śodhayatā*) literally means "cleaning or purifying" and has been taken to refer to a plowing done "for the laying of the fire of the sacrifice." Says Janaka:

> Now one time, as I was plowing a field, a girl sprang up behind my plow. I found her as I was clearing the field, and she is thus known by the name of Sītā, furrow. (*Rām* 1.65.14; see Goldman 1984, 385)

Vālmīki, however, does not link Sītā's birth with any Vedic sacrificial narrative such as one finds in Draupadī's birth. Indeed, unlike Draupadī's birth, which is described by the *Mahābhārata*'s main narrator Vaiśaṃpāyana, Sītā's birth is never directly told in Vālmīki's narration, but only in four characters' recollections. First, as just quoted, Janaka recalls it to Rāma. Second, it is a question of a "story" that Sītā is asked to recount by Anasūyā, an ascetic woman she meets early in the forest toward the end of Book 2, who had heard the "story" but wants to hear it from its lovely subject herself (2.110.22; 23; 111.1). Third, Hanumān recalls it when he is telling Sītā her own story to reassure her that she can trust him when he finds her in her captivity (5.14.16). A fourth and last reference, however, complicates our picture.

After Rāma has slain Rāvaṇa, the Ṛṣi Agastya can finally tell Rāma who Sītā was in her previous life. She was an ascetic woman named Vedavatī, daughter of a law-abiding Brahmin Ṛṣi, himself the son of the chaplain of the gods, Bṛhaspati. Vedavatī gets her name from being born from her father's constant Vedic recitation (*Rām* 7.17.8). She was much courted by gods, demons, and other celestials, but her father had chosen her for Viṣṇu. Because of this, a demon king killed her father while he slept, whereupon her mother joined her father on the pyre. Making her father's will to marry Viṣṇu her own, she did austerities in a Himalayan forest to win Viṣṇu as her husband (7.17.1–17). Vedavatī told all this to Rāvaṇa, who found her in her retreat. When Rāvaṇa grabbed her by the hair, she avoided him by cutting it off. Her dying words as

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normal kind of "close encounter" would have been behind Draupadī and her brother's births. Such thought exercises, however, diminish our understanding of epic genealogies with their assumption that the unions behind them would have to have been ordinary. Cf. chapter 8, nn. 15, 32 (Brodbeck on Gaṅgā's father); 40 (van Buitenen on Satyavatī having been a fishing wench); Ghosh 2000, 34 on Satyavatī's parenting, cited after n. 42; Chakravarti 2006, 260, speaking of Śaṃtanu's "marriage to the *apsara* Ganga."

she entered fire were an act of truth by which she sought to be reborn as "a female not born from a womb (*ayonijā*), a good woman (*sādhvī*), the daughter of a virtuous man" (27). It is by this means, says Agastya to Rāma, that Vedavatī was able to bring about Rāvaṇa's death by appealing to "your inhuman manliness" (*vīryam amānuṣam*; *Rām* 7.17.29) when she was "reborn among mortals on a field that was turned by the blade of a plow, like a crest of fire on a *vedi*" (30). That is, without it quite being Vedavatī's stated intent to kill Rāvaṇa in her next birth, in being reborn as Sītā she was able to accomplish just that by inspiring Rāma, who, now that Rāvaṇa is slain, has the tools to understand what Agastya means by Rāma's "inhuman manliness." "Inhuman" here means not just "extraordinary"; it implies "divine."[14] Until Rāma slew Rāvaṇa, he had thought he was human. But he learned thereafter that he was Viṣṇu, whose birth as Rāma enabled him to kill Rāvaṇa when that demon had disdained men and excluded them from the boon that protected him from being killed by creatures he thought more powerful (Pollock 1984).[15] Sītā is thus also born from a rite: one of self-immolation. But in her case the stated intent is hers, and ostensibly purely noble. Although killing a foe, and indeed a Brahmin (for Rāvaṇa is a Brahmin), results from both rites, in neither case is killing a stated intent of the heroine herself. Vedavatī could not have known that Viṣṇu would be born as a man to kill Rāvaṇa. (For the intentions behind Draupadī's birth, we must wait to discuss her wedding.)

It is interesting that according to Agastya, when Sītā was born on a plowed field, she appeared "like a crest of fire on a *vedi*." Vālmīki would seem to have magnified the *vedi* in question into a fire altar (in "Vedic" terms, either a *mahāvedi* or *uttaravedi*). He does not get this image from the *Mahābhārata*'s main version of the Rāma story, the *Rāmopākhyāna*, which knows nothing of Sītā being *ayonijā* or of a story of her birth in a furrow. The *Rāmopākhyāna* accounts for Sītā's birth and marriage to Rāma in one and a half verses, with the meager information that the "Artisan" god Tvaṣṭṛ, elsewhere in the *Ramopākhyāna* called the "All-Maker" Viśvakarman (*Mbh* 3.267.41), "made" (*cakāra*) Sītā to be Rāma's beloved wife (*Mbh* 3.258.9–10). This suggests that it is Vālmīki who makes Sītā resemble Draupaḍī. But whereas Draupaḍī's divine origin makes her complicit in the *Mahābhārata*'s divine plan, Sītā is born innocent of the divine plan of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

14. I cited one of many such usages in chapter 9 § E.2.c, where Dhṛṣṭadyumna, referring to Droṇa's use of the Brahma-weapon, says "this doer of low deeds kills us by an inhuman weapon (*amānuṣeṇa . . . astreṇa*; *Mbh* 7.168.24). See chapter 12 for further discussion.

15. Pollock 1984; see chapter 9 n. 6. Rāma has learned of his divinity by now since hearing it from Brahmā (*Rām* 6.105.9–29) after his abusive treatment of Sītā at her fire ordeal, with the information included that he was born to kill Rāvaṇa (25–26).

One other feature of the births of Draupadī and Sītā opens onto matters that relate to the agonistic oppositions that underlie each epic's narrative. Draupadī's birth demonstrates the poets' determination to identify her with a nefarious darkness that arises from the agonistic dimensions of her birth and is resonant in three of her names: Kṛṣṇā, "Black"; Pāñcālī, invoked at her birth; and another name we shall come to, Yājñasenī. Pāñcālī has powerful overtones: among them an evocation of the number five, *pañca*, which may predispose her to marrying five men; and an extended meaning of "puppet" discernible in the word *pañcālika*, a little doll.[16] The Pāñcāla family cycle is deeply embedded in the *Mahābhārata*'s central narrative, where it recalls a period in middle Vedic culture when Kuru and Pañcāla kings ruled the "mesopotamia" where the Ganges and Yamunā Rivers converge, and represented a ritual complementarity for the codifiers of the Vedic sacrifice.[17] In contrast, Sītā's family, the royal Videhas of Mithilā, are of no wider interest to Vālmīki than for being a collateral line to the Ikṣvākus who can supply brides to Rāma and his brothers in a joint nuptials (*Rām* 1.72.14–23). As far as Sītā is concerned, Vaidehī and Maithilī are just affectionate names for her. Putting these matters together, one can say that Vālmīki draws on, or perhaps constructs, a folkloric birth for Sītā, and leaves the Videhas out of the complexities of his narration.[18]

B. Marriage, Divine Plan, Early Signs of Trouble

It is clearly, however, their marriages toward which the stories of Draupadī and Sītā are driving, each as part of a divine plan.

Draupadī is born to do "the work of the gods." When Yudhiṣṭhira sees himself and his brothers overwhelmed by her beauty and decides all five will marry her jointly, he sees that "Pāñcālī's winsome beauty, ordained by the Ordainer (Vidhātṛ) himself, surpassed all other women and beguiled all creatures" (*Mbh* 1.182.13). And at the end of his own life, Indra tells him:

> O Yudhiṣṭhira, she is Śrī, who took the form of Draupadī for your sake, becoming human though not born of a womb, beloved of the world, she who smells good, born into the line of Drupada and supported by you, fashioned by the Trident-Bearer [Śiva] for the sake of your pleasure. (18.4.9–10)

16. See, for her most recent discussion, Biardeau 2002, 2: 358 n. 37.

17. See chapters 3 § B, 4 § B.1.d.1, 5 § B, and 7 § B.2.

18. Those complexities are known in the *Mahābhārata*, which makes plays on the meaning "bodiless" for "Videha."

Now, from its first mention within the *Mahābhārata*'s frame, Draupadī's marriage is called a *svayaṃvara* (*Mbh* 1.2.36). As we saw in chapter 8, this is the celebrated heroic mode of marrying in which a princess "chooses" a husband in a ceremony that also calls on suitors to distinguish themselves. Draupadī's vivid marriage tale emerges from the agonistic "work of the gods" that she is born to enable.

The five Pāṇḍava brothers are disguised as young Veda students so that Duryodhana will not know that they and their mother Kuntī have survived his plot to kill them in a burning house. Having settled in a town for a while to study Veda, they begin to hear about the *svayaṃvara* being planned for Draupadī, who was born not from a womb but from the middle of an altar (*Mbh* 1.153.1–10). When Kuntī sees that her sons are unsettled by this story "as if they were struck by spears," she says it is a good time to leave for Pañcāla, where "the Pāñcālas are heard to be generous with alms" (1.156.1–7). Since they are living off the alms they gather, Kuntī is showing a maternal interest in her sons' dinner. But her usage of the term "alms" after seeing them so unsettled at hearing about Draupadī suggests she may already be beginning to give the term a double meaning. On the way to Pañcāla, Vyāsa drops in on them and tells them a story: An unnamed maiden, "daughter of a great-spirited seer, with a narrow waist, full hips, and a lovely brow—a girl favored with all virtues," once did mortifications to ask Śiva for a husband, since, because of unnamed acts she had done, she was "ill-fortuned" and had not found one even though she was beautiful and good. When Śiva granted her request, she repeated it five times, upon which he favored her to have five husbands at once. She is now the daughter of Drupada whom they have been hearing so much about, "the blameless Kṛṣṇa . . . destined to be your wife!" (1.156.11–157.14). Vyāsa urges them on and departs.

Once the Pāṇḍavas arrive in the Pañcāla capital, they continue their begging rounds and take lodging with a Brahmin who maintains a potter's workshop (*Mbh* 1.176.6).[19] Here we learn King Drupada's motivation in holding a *svayaṃvara*.

> It had always been Yajñasena's [that is, Drupada's] wish to give Kṛṣṇā
> to the diademed Arjuna, but he did not divulge it. Since
> he hoped to search out the Pāṇḍavas, [he] had a very hard bow made,
> well-nigh impossible to bend. (*Mbh* 1.176.8–9)

Drupada knows that Arjuna helped Droṇa deprive him of half his kingdom. Presumably he wants his daughter to forge a Pāṇḍava–Pāñcāla alliance that

19. The potter-Brahmin is a Bhārgava—all this an unusual combination that may suggest a martial inclination (Biardeau 1967–68).

would keep Arjuna from siding with Droṇa again. The name Yajñasena—meaning "He whose army is the sacrifice"—has several uses in this sequence describing Drupada's paternity of Draupadī.[20] As a patronymic, it gives her the name Yājñasenī, "She whose army is sacrificial." Both share the name's etymology, but she is the one for whom it has the richest implications. For her, it first occurs when the Pāṇḍavas first hear about her:

> And there, O Janamejaya, at the end of a story, the Brahmin told
> of the wondrous *svayaṃvara* of Yājñasenī among the Pāñcālas,
> of the origin of Dhṛṣṭadyumna [and][21] of Kṛṣṇā's wombless birth at
> Drupada's great sacrifice. (*Mbh* 1.153.7–8)

Since the divine plan will require a great "sacrifice of battle" to be fought to avenge Draupadī, her name Yājñasenī may spill over from the vengeful purpose of her father's rite to refer to the extra "work of the gods": the destruction of the warrior class for which she is born. For Draupadī Yājñasenī, the two armies will be the sacrifice of battle as both sacrificers and victims.[22]

At Draupadī's *svayaṃvara*, the feat called for is double. Contestants must first bend and string the very hard bow Drupada has prepared, and hit a difficult target. Kings come from all over. All find their way to an arena, and there, while the Pāṇḍavas sit with the Brahmins and the crowd swells, Draupadī descends[23] on the sixteenth day (*Mbh* 1.176.9–30). Dhṛṣṭadyumna announces the challenge and names the Kṣatriyas who have come, ostensibly[24] as contestants (177). Finally, after the Kṣatriyas have all exhibited their futility, Arjuna rises from among the Brahmins and in the twinkling of an eye strings the bow and hits the target. Drupada is pleased, and although he is yet to know who has won his daughter, he stands ready to aid him with his army. As an uproar mounts from the disgruntled Kṣatriyas, Yudhiṣṭhira and the Pāṇḍava twins beat a hasty retreat back to the potter's house. Draupadī, smiling, garlands Arjuna, completing the rite itself, and begins following him as his wife (179.16–23).

Now Kṛṣṇa, Kuntī, and Vyāsa intervene in ways that complicate this happy outcome to bring about what Vyāsa has already seeded in the Pāṇḍavas and

20. At *Mbh* 1.156.7; 175.7; 187.18; 190.6.

21. Śikhaṇḍin is also mentioned here: another brother who was, however, born a girl, having been Ambā in his previous life. A sex change will allow him to avenge Ambā against Bhīṣma.

22. References to Draupadī by this name in Tamil as Yākaceṉi suggest that the Sanskrit precursor Yājñasenī was not understood casually; see Hiltebeitel 1988, 194, 338, 392.

23. The description is *avatīrṇā tato raṅgaṃ draupadī* (1.176.30bc): "Draupadī then descended into the arena"—as Couture 2001, 320 points out, the *raṅga* is a kind of public theatrical "stage." His article makes an important contribution to the background of the *avatāra* concept by tracing all usages of the verbal root *ava-√tṝ* in the *Mahābhārata* (see chapter 12).

24. "Ostensibly," because he mentions Kṛṣṇa. As we will see, Kṛṣṇa is not there as a contestant.

their mother's minds. Kṛṣṇa makes his first appearance in the *Mahābhārata* plot: a modest one that it is tempting to call a cameo. He has two roles, maybe three. One is to be the first to recognize the Pāṇḍavas (180.17–22). We are yet to learn that he and Draupadī have some kind of unique and special friendship, but since they do, he is probably there also to see that she falls into the right hands—or better, that she does not fall into the wrong ones.[25] But most important, he gets the Kṣatriyas to stop fighting by announcing that Draupadī has been "won according to *dharma*" (181.32). The fact that the fighting stops instantly shows that Kṛṣṇa speaks, at this point in the text, with unexpected authority. Saying "she is won according to *dharma*" (*dharmeṇa labdhā*) makes his first word in the *Mahābhārata* "*dharma*," and lets us know from the first that *dharma* is something he speaks with authority about.

Kuntī's intervention takes us back to the potter's shop.[26] One does not know whether Yudhiṣṭhira and the twins are back, and have brought her any news from the *svayaṃvara*. But her anxiety over Arjuna and Bhīma builds "when the time for begging passed." Again she has that maternal interest in the family's dinner, but that cannot be all she is thinking about, for she asks herself, "But still, could a thought born from the great-spirited Vyāsa be overturned?" (*Mbh* 1.181.37–39). She is recalling Vyāsa's prediction that her five sons will marry Draupadī. While she is preoccupied with such uncertainties, Arjuna and Bhīma arrive and,

> highly pleased, announced [Draupadī], saying "Alms" (*bhikṣā*)!
> [Kuntī] had gone inside the hut then without seeing her sons, and
> said, "Enjoy it all equally." But afterward, setting eyes on the girl,
> Kuntī said, "Woe! What have I said?" (1.182.1–2)

The announcement of Draupadī as "alms" suggests either that Arjuna and Bhīma are complicit or have a chancy sense of humor. And we have just seen that Kuntī has Draupadī on her mind as well as food. A desiderative from the verbal root √*bhaj*, "to share or partake," *bhikṣā*, "alms," is literally what one "desires to share or partake."[27] If Freud can be given a moment here, they are *all* complicit.

25. On the epic scenes of their friendship, see Hiltebeitel 2007*a*. Insofar as Draupadī is Śrī incarnate, the *Mahābhārata* wants to be subtle in putting Viṣṇu's perennial divine partnership with Śrī on deep background.

26. See chapter 8 § B, taking Kuntī's role in this episode, and the Pāṇḍavas' heeding her, to exemplify the law of the mother.

27. A desiderative from √*bhaj*, "to share or partake," *bhikṣā* is literally "desire to partake." Tamil adaptations in the medieval *Villipāratam* and Draupadī cult dramas revise the sexual innuendo. Arjuna says, "Look at the girl (*kaṉṉi*) I've brought," to which Kuntī, allegedly hard of hearing, says, "If it is a *kaṉi* (fruit), all five must share it equally" (Hiltebeitel 1988, 200; cf. 279–90 on Draupadī as peeled "fruit"). A bit further along in the *Mbh*, Yudhiṣṭhira changes the metaphor to explain matters to Draupadī's father: she is a "treasure" (*ratnabhūtā*), and the Pāṇḍavas have an agreement (*samaya*) to share every treasure (*Mbh* 1.187.23–24). Leaving Kuntī's inadvertency unmentioned, he still says his mind (heart, desire) follows her word: "So mother says, and so goes my mind (*evaṃ caiva vadaty ambā mama caiva manogatam*). This is firm *dharma*, king. Carry it out unhesitantly" (29).

As we have seen in chapter 8, Kuntī knows the Law, and that is what concerns her now: "Afraid of *adharma* and ashamed," she takes Draupadī by the hand and goes to ask Yudhiṣṭhira how her word is not to be made untrue, and how Draupadī too will not incur unprecedented *adharma*. Yudhiṣṭhira recommends Arjuna as groom, and Arjuna recommends Yudhiṣṭhira since the oldest brother should marry first. But he leaves it up to Yudhiṣṭhira to decide what will best meet the needs of *dharma* and please the Pañcāla king. Yudhiṣṭhira then sees how the beautiful Draupadī churns the hearts of all five, and, "remembering the entire word" of Vyāsa, he said, "The lovely Draupadī shall be the wife of all of us!" (1.182.8–15).

Drupada, for his part, is dubious until Vyāsa "by chance arrived" (*Mbh* 1.187.20–32). Vyāsa takes Drupada aside to tell him the aforementioned *Pañcendra-Upākhyāna*, by which he "authorizes" the polyandry fully and squares the Pāṇḍavas' plan with the divine one. Formerly, Vyāsa begins, some gods sat at a joint sacrifice. While detained as a participant, Yama, god of Death, stops killing creatures. Some gods grow anxious about the proliferation of humans and appeal to Brahmā that there is no longer a distinction between mortals and immortals. Brahmā says not to worry, when Yama has finished, he will have power over men. The reassured gods then go on sacrificing until Indra sees golden lotuses floating down the Gaṅgā. These he traces upriver to the tears of Śrī, who is weeping at the river's source over the fall of four former Indras. Drupada now hears that the Pāndavas and Draupadī are the five Indras and Śrī, ordained by Śiva to become mortals and marry. Only by "unbearable" and lethal *karma* will they be able to regain the world of Indra (*Mbh* 1.189.1–26).

This subtale and the main story tie together: Yama will not be alone in bringing death to the human world. The conclusion of the gods' rite will take place in the *Mahābhārata* war, which will be fought for the sovereignty of Yudhiṣṭhira who, like Yama, is called Dharmarāja, and who is really Yudhiṣṭhira's father Dharma—Death, as it were, warmed over as Justice.[28] Vyāsa goes on to complete this window into the divine plan by accounting for the birth of Kṛṣṇa, and gives Drupada the "divine eye" (189.35–36) to see the truth of it all. He then reinforces Śiva's part in what is ordained for Draupadī by retelling to Drupada the story of his daughter's previous birth and boon of five husbands, by which Vyāsa had earlier put the polyandry idea into Yudhiṣṭhira's head.

The *Mahābhārata*'s divine plan has certainly advanced and become clearer, if also more complicated. We note that Gaṅgā keeps a residual role. The tears of

28. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 119–21. As discussed in chapter 9 § C, "The Yakṣa's Questions" marks Yudhiṣṭhira's integration of these deadly roles and themes into his identity, confirmed by his father Dharma, as Dharma.

Śrī descend from the source of her earthly waters, to be traced back to Śrī by Indra after the rite of Yama has finished. Once Śiva ordains the births of the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī, the gods then go to Viṣṇu, who confirms all of Śiva's arrangements. Then, plucking a white and black hair from his head, Viṣṇu ordains his own incarnations as Baladeva and Kṛṣṇa (*Mbh* 1.189.31). Unlike the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī who are ordained by Śiva to lives of lethal *karma*, Baladeva and Kṛṣṇa are ordained by Viṣṇu to in a certain manner direct and contain their violence—as Kṛṣṇa has just done at Draupadī's *svayaṃvara* by saying his first word, *dharma*.

Sītā's marriage "story" has a reputation for being similar, since both are known as *svayaṃvaras*. But just as with her birth, we see evidence that Vālmīki is innovating. As already noted, the *Rāmopākhyāna* takes care of Sītā's birth and marriage cursorily without mentioning either her birth from the earth or her *svayaṃvara*. It seems that Vālmīki enhances Sītā's story by making it more like Draupadī's in these early episodes, even while making Sītā herself unlike Draupadī in ways that have to do with her relatively *un*divine womanhood and the purity and monogamous morality of her marriage. Marrying Rāma certainly draws Sītā into the text's divine plan. But unlike Draupadī, she is not part of the gods' formulation of that plan, which, in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, accounts only for incarnations of male divinities. Otherwise, the *Rāmopākhyāna* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* agree that Viṣṇu descends as Rāma and that the gods led by Indra take birth among monkeys and bears to assist in the divine plan (*Mbh* 3.260.4–15).

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sītā's father Janaka never mentions a *svayaṃvara*. He says his daughter may be won by a *vīryaśulkā*, a "bride-price of heroism" (*Rām* 1.65.15, 17).[29] Surprisingly, just as Sītā's birth from the earth is never directly told in Vālmīki's narration, but only as a "story" that certain characters recall, the same applies to her marriage being a *svayaṃvara*. But whereas the birth story is recalled on four occasions, a "*svayaṃvara* story" is recalled only once, along with the birth story, during Sītā's exchange with the wife of one of the great Vedic Ṛṣis whom she and Rāma meet in the forest: Anasūyā, the wife of Atri. When Sītā tells Anasūyā the story of her birth, Anasūyā's question is really about her having *heard* that Sītā had a *svayaṃvara*, whereupon the two of them become the only persons to use this term for Sītā's marriage in Vālmīki's whole text:

> Anasūyā put a question to her about a certain story she was fond of.
> "It was at a *svayaṃvara*, they say, that glorious Rāghava obtained you,

29. This phrase seems to denote a certain kind of *svayaṃvara* (Jamison 1996, 225; see chapter 8, n. 59), and a *Mahābhārata* line uses its two components separately to describe the "price" (*śulka*) Drupada set by which a hero (*vīra*) won Draupadī (1.185.23). Yet the basic term *śulka*, "price," is used in marriage laws to describe the purchase of a bride through the marriage form known as "demonic," which is said to be worthy of Vaiśyas, not of Kṣatriyas, since the usual bride-price is money, *dhanaśulkā*.

> Sītā. This is at least the story that has reached my ears. I should like to hear that story in full, Maithilī, exactly as it happened, in its entirety. Would you tell it to me, please?" (*Rām* 2.110.23–24)

Vālmīki would seem to be drawing on a folklore for Sītā, or perhaps constructing one—and in any case reconstructing Sītā's story to parallel and rival Draupadī's.

Sītā answers Anasūyā that it was her not being born from a womb that led her father, after much worry, to think of holding a *svayaṃvara* for her. The point for both Draupadī and Sītā seems to be that, even if such an abnormal birth makes it hard to find a good match, lords of the land would want to vie for such an earth-born bride.[30] Sītā says Janaka had received an immense heavy bow and two quivers of divine origin, and invited the kings to win his daughter by raising and stringing it. But the kings only looked and left, unable to lift it.[31] After a long time, one day Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa came, eager to see the bow; and again Janaka brought it out. Like Arjuna, Rāma strung and drew it "in the twinkling of an eye," but more than this (or less, since he did not have to shoot at anything), he broke it (2.110.36–47). "Thereupon," says Sītā,

> . . . my father, true to his agreement, raised up a splendid water vessel, ready to bestow me on Rāma. But ready though my father was to bestow me, Rāma would not accept me right away, for he did not know the will of his father. . . . So my father invited my father-in-law, . . . and afterwards bestowed me on the celebrated Rāma. . . . And that is how I was bestowed on Rāma, there at the *svayaṃvara*, and justly (*dharmeṇa*) I love my husband, the best of men. (2.110.48–52)

Sītā's story is known for a certain "simplicity,"[32] but one can also feel the strains in it. If she had a *svayaṃvara*, it was an interrupted, disappointing, and even failed one between the suitors' departure and Rāma's arrival long after, with no rivals remaining. Nothing is left of the bride's "self-choice." Unlike Draupadī, who gets to garland Arjuna with a smile, it is not Sītā but her father who acts for her by lifting a vessel. Unlike Draupadī, who immediately sets off with Arjuna, Sīta has to wait until approval comes from Rāma's father. Unlike the Pāṇḍavas, who fit their marriage of Draupadī to the word and law of their mother, Rāma upholds the word and law of his father. Sītā does get to say, however belatedly, that it all came out "justly" (*dharmeṇa*). In the *Mahābhārata*, Krishna makes that pronouncement on the occasion itself.

30. In his earlier account, Janaka links Sītā's *ayonijā* birth with his setting of the *vīryaśulkā* as the "price" of winning her (*Rām* 1.65.15).

31. In Janaka's version, they offered a long siege (1.65.21–25).

32. See Pollock 1986, 525.

As far as I am aware, the *Mahābhārata* keeps Draupadī quiet on the *dharma* of her polyandry, but folklores and modern fictions give her plenty of complaints.[33] Although Draupadī has not yet said a thing, we can see how the questionable *dharma* of her marriage implies her complicity in its outcome no less than her mother-in-law's, her husbands', the author's, and Kṛṣṇa's—even though all Kṛṣṇa actually spoke to was how she was won. One can only imagine what she was thinking. As to Sītā, we do have her afterthoughts, and see her rather wistfully reconciling love to *dharma* while rationalizing Rāma's delay in marrying her.

C. Sītā and Draupadī on Their *Svadharma*

Generally speaking, there are remarkably few places in the epics where the term *svadharma* is used with reference to women. The point is worth taking up in anticipation of chapter 11 on the *Bhagavad Gītā*, where the term has earned a certain renown. In the only occurrence I have found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma tells Sītā it would be her *svadharma* to stay behind and not do what she wants (*Rām* 2.25.2), which is to accompany him during his forest exile. Sītā then gets her way by quoting a supposed "*śruti*" verse on the sanctity of marriage:

> When in this world a woman's father gives her to a man by means of the ritual waters and in accord with [his?] *svadharma* (*adbhir dattā svadharmeṇa*), she remains his even in death. (*Rām* 2.26.16)

This verse is not clear whether the *svadharma* in question is her father's or hers, but before this, where it is clearly hers, the most interesting thing about Sītā's *svadharma* is that she does not accept it. Moreover, Rāma accepts her nonacceptance (something inconceivable when it comes to his own *svadharma*). Rāma seems to be making her *svadharma* up, or, perhaps more fairly, he is in the position of a man having little credibility when it comes to telling a woman what is in her own best interest (to suggest a parallel idiom).

As far as I can see, the *Mahābhārata* also gives Draupadī just one scene in which to use the term. At a point when she is alone in the forest because the Pāṇḍavas have gone hunting, she is confronted by a king who Vaiśaṃpāyana says has approached her like a jackal approaching a tigress (3.248.17; see above n. 7). Her visitor has come to find out who she is on behalf of King Jayadratha Saindhava (the husband of the hundred Kauravas' sister Duḥśālā), who has spotted the beautiful Draupadī alone and is scheming to abduct her. Sensing danger, Draupadī responds,

33. See Hiltebeitel 1999*a*; Ray, 1995; Divakaruni 2008.

> For I am alone in the forest, ruled by my *svadharma* (*niyatā svadharme*; i.e., as an orthodox wife), so how may I converse with you when you are also here alone? (3.250.3; Leslie 1989, 173–74 with gloss and translation slightly modified)

Having told the messenger how guests are dear to Yudhiṣṭhira (*priyātithir dharmasutaḥ*) and that Jayadratha must wait for her husbands' return (8), Draupadī continues to make *svadharma* a pretext to keep Jayadratha at bay:

> Thinking (only) of [her] *svadharma* pertaining to guests (*atithisvadharmam*), she entered that excellent hut made of leaves. (9)

Here, as Leslie's gloss makes clear, Draupadī defines her *svadharma* by her joint marital obligations to greet guests, and in the second usage it is again not that clear whether the *svadharma* is hers or Yudhiṣṭhira's. Ganguli takes it to be his: "remembering well her husband's character for hospitality" ([1884–96] 1970, 3: 570); van Buitenen (1978, 710) and Leslie to be hers, as I have translated it here. The eighteenth-century Tryambakayajvan, writing on women's *dharma*, takes this passage as exemplary for a woman who must speak to an unrelated man (*parapuruṣa*) in her husband's absence (Leslie 1989, 173–74).

It is worth asking after the principles behind such usages. *Manu* speaks of female *svadharma* only once, but is certainly revealing as to one way that it may be used. Even though *Manu* scorns the practice of levirate, he allows that a woman may be "appointed in accordance with the Law specific to her (*svadharmeṇa niyuktāyām*)"—that is, "in accord with her *svadharma*," if her husband "is dead, impotent, or sick" (9.64–66, 167). As formulated, *Manu* completely ignores a woman's desire or will; and, as we saw in chapter 8, several *Mahābhārata* women, without hearing *niyoga* called a "law of their own," find the practice disagreeable. The rule does, however, serve to point out that *Manu*'s one reference to a woman's *svadharma* confines it to a context of marriage, albeit marriage under duress. Not surprisingly, Rāma's first usage is a little like *Manu*'s in defining a woman's *svadharma* by a supposed marital requirement. Though our sample is small, it seems possible to generalize from a third example that when men are speaking, that would be the result to expect.

Here it will be worth keeping in mind that, wherever Kṣatriya and other non-Brahmin women are the ones concerned, they are supposed to fit their expectations into an assortment of legally recognized forms of marriage that the Law books define primarily for Brahmins: a constraint we met in the story of Ambā. Her story includes another of the very few instances I have found where the epics use *svadharma* with reference to women, and offers a useful illustration of the principle just mentioned. When the powerful sage Rāma

Jāmadagnya arrives to take up Ambā's cause and challenge Bhīṣma on her behalf for his part in ruining her marriage to King Śālva, he says,

> Bhīṣma, what thoughts prompted you first to abduct the Kāśi king's daughter against her will, and again to let her go? . . . Now, because you abducted her she has been rejected by Śālva. Therefore take her back by my appointment (*man niyogāt*), Bhārata. Let the princess regain her own Law (*svadharmam . . . labhatu*), tiger among men. (*Mbh* 5.178.5, 7–8)

In Ambā's case, the principle is clear: her *svadharma* hinges entirely on marriage as something arranged and "appointed" by men. Whatever she may have done out of will or love to regain her betrothed, she lost her chance for such a *svadharma* when he rejected her—and also because Bhīṣma let her go, which, had he not done so, would have given her an alternate *svadharma* as a lawful wife to one of his nephews, for whom he had abducted her and her two sisters. The proposed resolution that the sage re-"appoint" her to Bhīṣma is no solution at all, since Bhīṣma has made a lifelong vow of celibacy.

Yet we have seen a counterprinciple at work when Sītā and Draupadī speak about their *svadharma* themselves. In Sītā's case it enables her to negotiate and even change Rāma's mind. And Draupadī uses it to maneuver and play for time. Two more examples where women speak for themselves confirm that there is a gender-specific counterprinciple at work. In one, the Rākṣasī Hiḍimbā tells Kuntī that she is abandoning her friends, kin, and *svadharma* to marry Kuntī's son Bhīma (*Mbh* 1.143.7). It not clear what she means by her *svadharma*, but, like Sītā, she is free to abandon it and it seems generous of her to do so. Since mention of her kin suggests a reference to Rākṣasa habits, it could be that in making a love match she renounces the exciting Rākṣasa mode of marriage that would call for her abduction, or even that she foregoes eating Bhīma (Wendy Doniger, conversation, April 2011). So far, though, Sītā, Draupadī, and Hiḍimbā are still, like Rāma, Manu, and Rāma Jāmadagnya, relating their usages of women's *svadharma* to marriage. Fortunately, we have one last instance on the distaff side where this is not a requirement. This is a usage by a Yoga-specialist named Sulabhā, who tells the philosopher king Janaka,

> Firmly devoted to my *svadharma*, I am not one who makes confusion of *dharma* (*na dharmasaṃkarakarī svadharme 'smi dhṛtavratā*). (12.308.185cd)[34]

34. Cf. Fitzgerald 2002, 667–68: "I am not creating a mixture of Lawful Norms. I hold firm to the practices of my own Lawful Duty." Fitzgerald's study is rich on this *Mokṣadharmaparvan* unit and Sulabhā's background

Sulabhā speaks as a nun or ascetic (*bhīkṣukī*, 308.7) and as a gender philosopher from a nondualist Sāṃkhya position for whom all beings, whether male or female, have bodies and components made equally of the same matter (*prakṛti*; 113–15). It is thus important that she speaks as a woman (see Sutton 2000, 440–43). But where she mentions her *svadharma*, it is to claim that she is free (*svatantrā*; 138–40) from the constraints and confusions of *dharma* that Janaka would like to say she has violated by possessing his body to see if *he* is as free of worldly attachments as he claims. As Sutton says, Sulabhā's response can be recognized as "representing the critique of *svadharma* typical of *nivṛtti*" (2000, 441), by which he means a critique from the standpoint of renunciation that can imply a critique of *svadharma*. Janaka does not mention *svadharma*, however, and accuses Sulabhā mainly of *varṇasaṃkara*, *āśramasaṃkara*, *gotrasaṃkara*, and finally *dharmasaṃkara* (*Mbh* 12.308.59–62)—that is, he charges her with "confusion" or "mixing" of caste, life-stage, lineage, and of *dharma* itself. He charges her with the whole gamut, but she proves him wrong on each count. When she finally mentions her firmness in *svadharma* along with her not committing the pinnacle of these confusions, she formulates her *svadharma* as a rather bold, unusual, and probably ironic expression of her socially untrammeled philosophical standpoint.

There seems to be a considerable gap between what men prescribe as women's *svadharma* and what women can make of it as a law of their own.

D. Captivity and Exile

As we saw in section B with Anasūyā, and just now even in her brief exchange with Rāma, *Rāmāyaṇa* characters also think of Sītā as good to talk to. But that is not to disparage Draupadī. It is now time to concentrate on what they have to say under real duress. I turn to passages where their voices are strongest—not only in what their words recall but in what they anticipate in the fuller narratives. Regarding what they have in common, I choose episodes where they first speak out after their identity as *dharmapatnīs* has been brutally violated. At this point our tracing of these epics' divine plans moves into a discussion of *dharma* and *bhakti* that will be a consideration through the remaining chapters. As we know from Fred Hardy (1983, 5–9, 331–429, 527–34) and Karen Prentiss

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and philosophical outlook, but he does not comment on this verse. As he points out, she is called a "follower of *yogadharma*" whose positions "resemble aspects of 'Sāṃkhya' doctrine and Buddhist themes" (642). Her name "means 'easy to get,' which has an obvious ironic pertinence to their encounter" (668). Their dialogue takes place in Janaka's court, where he makes a "public fuss" (654). See also Vanita 2003.

(1999, 53), later vernacular *bhakti* traditions make the woman's voice a vehicle for devotional sentiments in the mood of love in separation. This section will suggest that the epics lay some early ground for this.[35] The two episodes are, however, asymmetrical. The first difference is that whereas Draupadī will talk about divinity to a husband who is with her, Sītā addresses her thoughts on such matters to a husband from whom she is painfully apart.

Our text for Sītā finds her being held captive in a grove guarded by Rākṣasīs and hounded by Rāvaṇa, who has given her two months to live, threatening that if she does not come to love him the Rākṣasīs will prepare her for his breakfast or eat her themselves. Yet Hanumān has found her. While he hides in a tree, deciding how best to speak to her, she makes three speeches, ostensibly to herself (*Rām* 5.23–26). As Hanumān sees her make these three speeches amid exchanges with the Rākṣasīs, it is not always clear what he actually hears, since her words seem at times to become soliloquies, particularly as she more and more addresses herself to Rāma. Through all these speeches, she can be said to be "brooding," in each with variations on √*cint*, "to think." Going beyond *Manu*, she is a woman thinking for herself.

One can see Sītā's deepening despair through her exclamations and interjections. She makes five appeals using words whose overlapping range can be translated "oh" or "alas."[36] In the first speech, she calls out by name to Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and their two mothers: "'O Rāma!' and then again 'Oh Lakṣmaṇa!' 'Oh Kausalyā, my mother-in-law!' 'Oh Sumitrā!'" (*Rām* 5.23.11cd). The rest all occur in her third speech, which she begins, "Alas, virtuous folk in the world have a popular saying that there is no such thing as an untimely death. Alas, it must be true if I, who lack all merit, have managed to survive even for a moment under such abuse" (26.3). Next, she says, "Alas, the two months allotted me … will soon elapse," and, in a passage we shall revisit, again calls on the four mothers plus her own mother as well (26.7–8). Finally, she saves her last call for Rāma only, and with rather clear *bhakti* overtones—"Alas, Rāma of the long arms, true to your vows! Alas, you whose face rivals the full moon! Alas, you benefactor and beloved of the living world! You do not realize that I am to be slain by Rākṣasas" (26.11)—from which point she launches her closing apostrophe to him. She also makes three "curses," one in each brooding: first, cursing the human state (23.20); second, cursing herself as "ignoble and unchaste" to have survived even a moment without Rāma (24.6); and then cursing life itself, which she would abandon had she poison or a weapon to do so (26.15–16).

35. For fuller "mapping" of *bhakti* in the passages treated in this section, see Hiltebeitel 2011*a*, chapter 11.

36. *Hā*, "an exclamation expressive of pain, anger, astonishment, satisfaction (= ah! alas! oh! ha!)" (MW 1,296); *bata*, "an interjection expressing astonishment or regret, generally = ah! oh! alas!" (MW 718).

Let us look at these three speeches for the points where Sītā addresses Rāma directly, even though he is not there. One translating team, inclined toward *bhakti* excisions, has cut Sīta short, removing the end of the second speech and all of the third (Brockington and Brockington 2006, 208–10). But the devotional overtones have direction, and run throughout. Be it noted that while translators, quite sensibly, have wanted to keep Sītā talking on an intelligible human and wifely plane, it has meant undertranslating certain loaded words: most notably the impossible-to-translate *ātman*, "self," but also words that I will translate with reference to gratitude,[37] pity, compassion, lordship, power, abandonment, and belovedness[38] so as to bring out her speeches' *bhakti* overtones. I am not saying this is the "right" way to translate these terms, just that we may trace a devotional thread through them that is intertwined with the ruptured domestic thread of Sītā and Rāma's marriage, and also her thoughts on Rāma simply as a human king.

As Sītā's first speech (23.11–20) opens, she recalls a popular maxim quoted by paṇḍits on how death comes only at its appointed time (12–13), and grieves that her death will come now separated from Rāma, whom she then dwells on until this train of thought ends:

> This pitiable woman, whose merit must be small (*alpapuṇyā kṛpaṇā*), like a woman without a lord (*anāthavat*), must surely perish, like a laden vessel struck by strong winds in the midst of the ocean. Unable to see my husband and come under the Rākṣasīs' power (*vaśam*), I am collapsing under my grief like a riverbank undercut by water. How fortunate are those who are able to see my lord (*nātham*)—his eyes like the inner petals of a lotus—who walks with the valorous gait of a lion and is yet grateful (*kṛtajñam*), a speaker of what is beloved (*priyavādinam*). Separated from Rāma who knows himself (*rāmeṇa viditātmanā*),[39] there is no way that I can survive any more than if I had consumed virulent poison. What kind of sin did I commit in a former body that I obtain such cruel and terrible suffering?[40]

37. The term in question will be *kṛtajña* (5.23.16d; 24.12a; 26.12d). See MW: "knowing what is right, correct in conduct, *Mbh* xii.104.6; acknowledging past services or benefits, mindful of former aid or favours, grateful, Mn, Yājñ, etc." Goldman and Sutherland Goldman prefer "accomplished." See chapter 9 n. 10.

38. The little word *priyam*, "dear," which I will continue to translate in that fashion, carries a big load in these speeches. In addition to instances cited below, see 5.24.7: "What desire can I have for life or happiness without my beloved (*priyaṃ vinā*), that lord/husband (*bhartāram*) of all the sea-bounded earth whose word is beloved (*priyaṃvadam*)? I shall cast off my body; let them cut it up or eat it. For without my beloved (*priyavarjita*), I cannot long endure this suffering."

39. Goldman and Sutherland Goldman 1996, 180, "celebrated"; Brockington and Brockington 2006, 207, "sagacious." *Viditātman* recurs at the end of Sītā's second speech at 5.24.49.

40. On ruminations about hardships following from former karma being, in the *Mahābhārata*, "a trait especially of women characters," see Hiltebeitel 2007*a*, 112–14.

> Engulfed by this great grief, I want to abandon life. Guarded by these Rākṣasīs, I will never see Rāma again. A curse on this human state! A curse on being under another's power (*paravaśyatām*). Although I wish to, I cannot end my life. (23.14–20)

Sītā imagines the good fortune of others who might *see* Rama, without yet saying who they might be. She builds up a shaky image of him. She thinks he "knows himself," but he cannot really know his divine nature until he has killed Rāvaṇa. She grieves at being under "another's power," which in *Manu* defines lack of freedom.[41] Ostensibly she is held captive by the Rākṣasīs and Rāvaṇa. But she intimates that she is under some still higher power: her own karma? a lord's who should be grateful, who should know himself?[42] As her own imaginings continue, Rāma will not be so perfect.

Sītā's second and longest speech (5.24.3–49) follows a vivid depiction of her: "Grieving like a woman possessed, or a madwoman, or a woman in a state of utter confusion (*unmatteva pramatteva bhrāntacitteva śocatī*), she rolled on the ground like a filly" (5.24.2). She "broods" further on her captivity under the "Rākṣasa women's power" and on her separation from Rāma (3–5), curses herself (6), addresses the Rākṣasīs and Rākṣasas including Rāvaṇa while predicting their downfall and Laṅkā's destruction (11–25),[43] comes back to herself (35), and ends on the theme of being under "Rāvaṇa's power" (49). Here, she first centers her attention on Rāma wondering why he does not come for her:

> Rāghava is renowned, wise, grateful, and compassionate (*kṛtajñaś ca sānukrośaḥ*). Therefore I think it must be the exhaustion of my good fortune that has made this man of good conduct uncompassionate

41. *M* 4.159, as cited in chapter 5 § B in the context of *Manu*'s discussion of *ātmatuṣṭi*.

42. For a powerful study of this whole sequence, see Sutherland Goldman 2001, 223; 232–38, for whom "the passage represents the lowest emotional ebb of the epic" (237). Sutherland Goldman makes this case from the standpoint of Sītā's words at *Rām* 5.23.10: "how wretched to be under the power of another (*dhig astu paravaśyatām*)." As Sutherland Goldman points out, the words are "ambiguous, since the word '*para*' could refer equally to Rāma, Rāvaṇa, or to the *rākṣasī* guards" (233). Her favored reading, noting that the commentator Govindarāja says the same, is that Sītā is referring to Rāma; but Sutherland Goldman takes this only in Govindarāja's sense that it refers to a wife's societally structured inability to make decisions, such as killing herself, without her husband's permission (233–34; 237; 394 n. 36). I doubt that Vālmīki's Sītā is as straight-jacketed as this commentator's. Sutherland-Goldman recalls that "Pollock has argued convincingly" that Rāma's divinity "is fundamental to the epic narrative" (335 n. 30)—referring to two of Pollock's discussions of this matter (1984; 1991, 51–52), but not his exploration of the importance of the *secret* of Rāma's divinity as a sustained narrative theme (1984). I will be arguing that Vālmīki presents Sītā's "lowest emotional ebb" (including these words) within the tensions sustained by this secret, and, moreover, that the whole passage repeatedly brings this tension into play and alludes to its eventual unfolding.

43. Brockington and Brockington, as usual inclined toward *bhakti* excisions, think Sītā originally would break off precisely here, and that the poem does not resume until 5.25.1, with the Rākṣasīs' outrage at Sītā's resistance. They also remove 5.26, containing Sītā's third speech entirely, along with 5.27 (2006, 208–10). This means that of the four segments we are discussing, they leave only the first two.

> (*sadvṛtto niranukrośaḥ*).[44] For why has he who singlehandedly annihilated fourteen thousand Rākṣasas in Janasthāna not come for me? This Rāvaṇa, who holds me captive, surely has very little strength. Surely my husband is capable of killing him in battle. Why then has Rāma, who slew in battle that bull among Rākṣasas Virādha in the Daṇḍaka Forest, not come for me? Granted, it is difficult to assault Laṅkā, which is situated in the middle of the ocean. Still, there is nothing in the world that can stop the flight of Rāghava's arrows. Why has Rāma, so firm in his valor, not come to rescue his cherished wife, who is carried off by a Rākṣasa? I think Lakṣmaṇa's older brother must not know that I am here. For if that mighty man knew it, would he then endure this outrage? (24.12–18)

Her key verse here is the first one, bringing Rāma's compassion into question around the thought that he might become uncompassionate now that she has been abducted—as he will in fact be in imposing her two ordeals on her. Sītā then multiplies these anxieties in this second speech's closing:

> How, in my great suffering, shall I do without him—without seeing my beloved Rāma, the corners of his eyes bloodred? . . . Rāma must not know that I am alive. For if he and Lakṣmaṇa knew, it is impossible that the two of them would not scour the earth for me. Surely Lakṣmaṇa's heroic elder brother has gone—out of grief for me—from here to the world of the gods, having abandoned his body on earth. Fortunate are the gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas, and supreme Ṛṣis who can now see Rāma, my lotus-eyed lord. Or perhaps this wise royal Ṛṣi Rāma who loves *dharma* and is the Supreme Self (*paramātman*) has no use for me as his wife. There would be love for the one that is seen; there is no affection on the part of one who does not see. Ingrates (*kṛtaghnāḥ*) destroy; Rāma will not destroy.[45] Is it that I am completely devoid of qualities, or is it just the exhaustion of my good fortune, that I, Sītā, should be without Rāma, who is deserving of the best? It would be better for me to die. . . . Or perhaps the two brothers, best of men, have laid down their weapons and are wandering in the forest as forest dwellers, subsisting on roots and fruits. Or perhaps Rāvaṇa . . . has slain the heroic brothers Rāma and

44. Cf. Brockington and Brockington 2006, 208: "The Rāghava is famed for his wisdom, reason, and tenderness, but I suspect that this disastrous misfortune of mine has turned his righteousness to ruthlessness." Goldman and Goldman 1996, 420 n., however, recognize that the verse is about "compassion."

45. Basically Goldman and Sutherland Goldman's proposed "literal translation" of this "highly elliptical" verse 41 (1996, 421).

> Lakṣmaṇa by means of some trick. At such a time as this I can wish only to die. . . . Fortunate, indeed, are those great-souled, great-fortuned Munis who are revered for their truth, their selves conquered, for whom there is neither beloved nor unbeloved. Homage to those great-souled ones who detach themselves from both! Abandoned here by my beloved Rāma whose self is known (*rāmeṇa viditātmanā*), and fallen under the power of the wicked Rāvaṇa, I shall end my life. (24.35–49)

The passage widens the scope of Sītā's wavering. While imagining that Rāma may have gone to heaven out of grief for her, or that he and Lakṣmaṇa have relinquished their weapons and become forest wanderers, or that Rāvaṇa could have killed them by some trick, she broods twice on the "fortunate" celestial Ṛṣis or Munis in tellingly contrastive terms. First she imagines them greeting Rāma in heaven: "Fortunate are the gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas, and supreme Ṛṣis who can now see Rāma, my lotus-eyed lord" (39). But then she brings them down to the circumstances of her own despair: "Fortunate, indeed, are those great-souled, great-fortuned Munis who are revered for their truth (*satyasammatāḥ*), their selves conquered, for whom there is neither beloved nor unbeloved. Homage to those great-souled ones who detach themselves from both!" (47–48). According to commentators, the term *satyasammatāḥ* "suggests the sages' capacity to transcend *saṃsāra*" (Goldman and Sutherland Goldman 1996, 422). Sītā cannot aspire to this kind of detachment. Moreover, in the midst of all this, she has had the disturbing yet also penetrating thought that "perhaps this wise royal Ṛṣi Rāma who loves *dharma* and is the Supreme Self has no use for me as his wife" (40). Commentators have not missed this verse, one view being "that Rāma, as the *paramātmā* and as one whose mind consists of *dharma*, does not require a wife [to assist him in practicing *dharma*]" (Goldman and Sutherland Goldman 1996, 421; cf. Sutherland Goldman 2001, 235). Sītā brings her thoughts on this anxiety to some complex and subtle questions. If, as we have noted, the fruits of *dharma* can often be unseen, what of Rāma and Sītā's love when she is unseen? Raising the image of Rāma as a potential ingrate, who, to the extent that he does "know himself," would "love *dharma*" more than her, she reassures herself, perhaps wishfully, that Rāma "will not destroy," yet asks whether her own "qualities" (*guṇas*) are such as to have left her now without him. Indeed, Rāma will not involve Sītā in his ritual duties after the war. Her wifely *dharma* will be cast aside because he feels he must acknowledge the public's doubts about her time with Rāvaṇa.

Between the second and third speeches a good Rākṣasī named Trijaṭā describes a dream that augurs well for Sītā. Among the auspicious tidings,

she says, “I saw that lotus-eyed woman rise from her husband’s lap to stroke the sun and moon with her hands” (25.15); and, while identifying other good omens that show Sītā will soon hear welcome news, she says, “This lady (*devī*) does not deserve to suffer, and she is the one I saw standing in the sky” (33). The celestial vision certainly carries an intimation that this *devī* is a more than ordinary lady.

Sītā does not hear Trijaṭā describe her dream, and her third speech carries on her lonely soliloquy with mixed apostrophe to Rāma (5.26.3–16), ending at the point where even she senses the favorable omens that presage the presence of Hanumān. Again, there is a vivid transitional description: “Surrounded by the Rākṣasī women and cruelly menaced by the words of Rāvaṇa, timorous Sītā lamented, like a little girl abandoned in the midst of a desolate wilderness” (2). Her soliloquy now shifts from *ślokas* to doubled *triṣṭubh* verses, intensifying her grieving tone.[46] As in the first speech, she begins with a popular saying: “Alas, the good speak this truth in the world: that there is no such thing as untimely death. Alas it must be true if I, who lack all merit, have managed to survive even for a moment under such abuse” (3). Surely suicide would not be a fault when “I am about to be killed by this one unbeloved in my sight, to whom I could not give my affection any more than a twice-born could teach mantra to a non-twiceborn” (5).[47] For the rest (6–16), it is her concluding apostrophe to Rāma:

> Surely if Rāma, the lord of the world (*lokanātha*), does not come, the king of Rākṣasas will soon dismember me with sharp knives, as a surgeon might a fetus in the womb.[48] Alas, the two months allotted me, who have already suffered so long, will soon elapse! Then it will be for me, just as it would be for a thief, imprisoned and condemned to death for a crime against the crown, on the morning of his execution. Oh Rāma! Oh Lakṣmaṇa! Oh Sumitra!

46. See Sutherland Goldman 2001, 236 and 394 n. 41; J. Brockington 1998, 275, “containing Sītā’s renewed lament”; 390, “5.26–27 are again entirely in longer meters and show a high proportion of long compounds and similes—obvious signs of expansion in the second stage of growth.” Brockington does not address 5.24.38–49, where the *bhakti* is clearest, and never really correlates *bhakti* with any specific stage, but rather typifies it by varying *degrees* of being “late,” while also perhaps covering it with such overviews as, for stage 5, “after the [*Mahābhārata*] epic was committed to writing, the number of manuscripts needed for the purpose seems to have become a virtual library of Indian tradition” open to “new material of all sorts” (20–21; cf. 159). Reflecting similarly on the *Rāmāyaṇa* (379 ff.), he sees both epics as having their “particular character . . . in part due to their position at a time of transition . . . brought to an end by the transition from an oral to a written tradition” (27).

47. Sītā compares herself here to the Veda, playing on a recurrent theme brought up shortly before her three broodings in a famous passage where Hanumān looks down upon her from his tree, sees her emaciated, and reflects “with uncertainty: for she seemed barely discernible, like some Vedic text once learned by heart but now nearly lost for lack or recitation” (5.13.36). Indeed, this could be an “unconscious” theme on her part, since Rāma eventually learns that Sītā, in her previous life as Vedavatī, got that name from being born from her father’s constant Vedic recitation (7.17.8). See § A.

48. Cf. Goldman and Sutherland Goldman 1996, 58, citing *Rām* 5.17.1–3 where Sītā, at the first sight of Rāvaṇa coming to see her in the grove, “curls up in a fetal position, trembling like a plantain tree in a gale.”

> O mother of Rāma and my own mother as well! I, this luckless woman, will perish like a ship foundering in a storm at sea. Those vigorous sons of the lord of men must have been killed on my account through the strength of that creature in the form of a deer. . . . It must have been Time itself in the guise of a deer who deluded hapless me at that time when, fool that I am, I sent away my husband [and his] younger brother. . . . Alas, Rāma of the long arms, true to your vows! Alas, you whose face rivals the full moon! Alas, you benefactor and beloved of the living world (*hā jīvalokasya hitaḥ priyaś ca*)! You do not realize that I am to be slain by Rākṣasas. My taking you for my sole divinity (*ananyadevatvam*), my long suffering, my sleeping on the ground, and my rigorous adherence to *dharma*—this devotion to my husband has been fruitless (*viphalam*), like the favors men do for ingrates. Surely this *dharma* adventure of mine (*dharmaś carito mama*) has been vain and my exclusive devotion to my husband useless. For, pale and emaciated, I cannot see you; I am cut off from you without hope for our reunion. Once you have carried out your father's orders to the letter and have returned from the forest with your vow accomplished, you will, I think, make love with wide-eyed women, carefree, your purpose accomplished. But as for hapless me, Rāma, after having loved you so long, given you all my heart—to my own undoing—and practiced my vows and penances in vain, I shall abandon my accursed life. (26.6–15)

Those who *see* Rāma, always potentially a *bhakti* idiom, are no longer the celestial denizens but wide-eyed lovers. We see how Sītā keeps *dharma* and *bhakti* at play along with all the strands of her predicament before finally letting them unravel in her version of a wife's worst-case imaginings, well in tune with Rāma's overriding concern for his father's truth, if not when imagining his infidelities. Sītā also deepens the implications of her first invocation of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and their mothers, this time mentioning all four again but adding "and my own mother." For this, she uses an appropriately different term for "mother," *jananī*, "begetter," or "genetrix," hinting that she is speaking of the Earth, to whom she will finally appeal at her last ordeal when she will really end her life.[49] But for now, as she determines to hang herself from her

49. Note how Sītā's next words, coming right after the invocation of her mother, may compare *herself* to the earth as a ship tossed at sea: "I, this luckless woman, will perish like a ship foundering in a storm at sea." This would parallel a strong image of Draupadī after her gambling, who, according to Karṇa, "became the salvation (*śānti*) of the Pāṇḍavas! When they were sinking, boatless and drowning, in the plumbless ocean, the Pāñcālī

ponytail,[50] her thoughts turn more fondly to Rāma as she too becomes aware of the good omens noticed by Trijaṭā and takes hold of the branch of a great flowering tree (18–20).

I now turn to a scene early in Draupadī and the Pāṇḍavas' forest exile. I will maintain that Draupadī is portrayed, during a single conversation where it is particularly apt, somewhat surprisingly as a materialist. By this I mean that we can read behind a story she tells and some positions she takes that the epic poets have cast her, during this exchange, as expressing herself in terms that call to mind, though of course rather subtly,[51] associations with the Cārvāka or Lokāyata philosophy that was considered a heresy by both Brahmanical and Buddhist authors during the classical and medieval periods. Some of her views could also be called "empiricist," but "materialist" is the key term in the history of Indian philosophy to allow us to keep her story and her views in focus and in context. I do not propose that we are meant to think of Draupadī as a materialist beyond this episode. But once we see how she is portrayed in it, we will be able to see that the episode has built upon traits of hers found elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata* that lend depth to her materialist turn of thought while she airs it. As will be seen, it will at times be appropriate to qualify her views as "quasi"-materialist, but that will not, for my argument, undercut their materialist base. Insofar as she might be a materialist in this episode, we might also ask whether, along with that outlook, she is taking a kind of time out from *bhakti*.

Let us begin with a brief account of Johannes Bronkhorst's findings on the early Materialists. Bronkhorst argues that although a doctrine is attributed to them which holds that there is no consciousness beyond the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air, the main thrust of what singled them out was an opposition to the new doctrines of karma, rebirth, retribution, and "another world." For some time they joined early Mīmāṃsakas in opposition to all but the last of these doctrines, and before the two came to be depicted as opponents, both would have been defenders of Vedic Brahmanism against these

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became the Pāṇḍavas' boat to set them ashore (*Mbh* 2.64.2d–3). Both are likely evocations of the image of the heroine as boat *and* as the imperiled Earth sinking under her burden, as in the *Mahābhārata*'s *avataraṇa* myth (see Biardeau 2002, 1: 385).

50. *Rām* 5.26.17. Sītā wears her hair in an *ekaveṇī* (5.18.8; 55.7; 57.12, etc.), a term that means literally a "single-plait braid" but, in contrast to braids of three or more plaits, actually means an unplaited "braid" or a (long) ponytail such as *virahiṇīs* or women separated from their husbands conventionally wear in classical Sanskrit literatures. See Hiltebeitel 1980–81, 198. Goldman and Sutherand Goldman offer "woven braid" (1996, 189; Sutherland Goldman 2001, 237).

51. In this, it differs from the portrayal of the Rākṣasa demon named Cārvāka who, in Brahmin guise, denounces Yudhiṣṭhira after the war and is summarily executed by the syllable "Hum!" (*Mbh* 12.39).Yet Draupadī's counsel does bear some affinity, positionally, with that of Jābāli in *Rām* 2.100, who presents a Cārvāka or Lokāyata view in advising Rāma not to go to the forest at all—that is, he should not renounce the throne. See Pollock 1986, 511–13.

late-Vedic "new thought" trends. Early Cārvākas would also have been urban Brahmins drawn to royal capitals of the type reflected in the *Arthaśāstra* and the *Kāmasūtra*—and, we might add, in the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s depiction of Jābāli (see n. 51). And at some indeterminate but probably early point, they had a *sūtra* attributed to Bṛhaspati,[52] chaplain of the Vedic gods (see Bronkhorst 2007, 150–59, 161–62, 172, 309–10, 363–66).

Now the episode where Draupadī sounds like a materialist occurs thirteen months into the forest exile (*Mbh* 3.36.31–32) that she and the Pāṇḍavas must undertake as the outcome of the epic dice match. It presents the first conversation she has with her five husbands, and particularly with Yudhiṣṭhira, since that scene of humiliation and outrage for all of them, but especially for her.[53] At the beginning of this exchange, she is introduced as a *paṇḍitā*, a "scholar," a learned or wise lady, or "lady pandit."[54] This is, I believe, the only time the epic describes her in this way, which suggests that, even though it will not endorse her views, it wants to present them as the result of some considered opinion.

Initially, Draupadī berates Yudhiṣṭhira for his lack of kingly authority and *manyu*, manly wrath (3.28.19–34), and tells him a story to chide him for exalting *kṣama*, patience, or forbearance (3.29).[55] Yudhiṣṭhira later returns to the topic of manly wrath to claim a shred of it and at the same time show its dangers, claiming that the reason he did not stop the dicing is that he lost his head to manly wrath upon seeing how his opponent Śakuni was cheating![56] But for now, with her exasperation mounting, Draupadī introduces a new turn with the exclamation, "Glory be to the Placer and Ordainer (*namo dhātre vidhātre ca*) who have befuddled you!"[57] Draupadī then tells a second story of

52. See Bronkhorst 2008, 150–53. It is not clear whether one can date the attribution earlier than the *Mahābhārata*, but that does not rule out Draupadī's making an early reference to such a tradition. See Bronkhorst 2009, 157 n. 56, translating *Arthaśāstra* 1.2.4–5: "'The science of material welfare and the science of government and politics [are the only sciences],' say the followers of Bṛhaspati. For the Vedic lore is only a cloak for one conversant with the ways of the world." Cf. Chattopadhyaya [1959] 1973, 6, 127; cf. 128, 577–78 for Vedic descriptions of Bṛhaspati–Brahmaṇaspati that could have been taken in a materialist direction.

53. The exchange, quite lengthy, has been treated in some detail by Bailey (1983*a*, 150–57), Hill (2001, 168–76), Biardeau (2002, 1: 423–26, 437–44), and Malinar (2007*b*).

54. This, according to the narrative voice of Vaiśaṃpāyana, which introduces her as "dear and beautiful, a scholar (*paṇḍitā*) and devoted wife (*pativratā*)" (*Mbh* 3.28.2)—for which van Buitenen 1975, 274 reads "beloved and lovely, wise and faithful." Cf. Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 268; Malinar 2007*b*, 90; Karve 1974, 90: "hardly a complimentary epithet in the eyes of the Kshatriyas of the *Mahābhārata*"—forgetting that it is the Brahmin Vaiśaṃpāyana speaking.

55. See Malinar 2007*b*, 81 on the distinction early in their conversation between *manyu* and *kṣama*.

56. As Biardeau (2002, 1: 426, 440) observes, Yudhiṣṭhira soon offers what seems a new explanation of why he did not stop the dice match: that he lost his head to this kind of anger upon seeing how his opponent was cheating (*Mbh* 3.35.4–5).

57. *Mbh* 3.31.1 ab; thus van Buitenen 1975, 279, capturing Draupadī's exasperation. Cf. van Buitenen 1975, 297: "Homage to the Placer and Disposer (*namo dhātre vidhātre ca*), go a safe and healthy path" (3.38.25ab), where she uses the same words in her adieu to her beloved Arjuna when he sets off for divine weapons in the Himalayas.

sorts (it could actually be called more of an allegory), referring to it as an "ancient tradition" (*itihāsam purātanam*), and citing it with an abbreviation of the conventional formulaic *atrāpy udāharanti* ("as to this, they quote") mode of attribution that one finds also in some of the early *dharmasūtras* (with *atha* there, rather than *atra*) and widely in the *Mahābhārata*'s postwar didactic books.[58] Curiously, given that such formulaic usages typically mention a source for their account, Draupadī does not give one at this point for the "ancient tradition" she cites here (3.31.20–21)—apparently leaving that for later, as I will mention in a moment. This second story or allegory is about how the aforementioned Placer is behind everything: "As wooden puppets are assembled, so are these creatures, king; he makes the body and limbs move" (31.20–22). Having heard this account, Yudhiṣṭhira then charges Draupadī with heresy (*nāstikyam*; 3.32.1, 5), characterizing her view as an excessive doubt in *dharma* that can lead one to be reborn as an animal (6).[59] Draupadī will then conclude her dialogue with Yudhiṣṭhira by naming her source somewhat indirectly. Once, while she was doing errands and sitting on her father's lap, she overheard a learned Brahmin who had come to her father's house and spoken to her brothers on subjects that had first been propounded by Bṛhaspati (33.56–58).

Here we have some signposts by which to recognize where Draupadī's views have been nurtured. The source for her "puppet speech" (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 214 n. 106; 269) is a Brahmin who visited her father, King Drupada's capital, when she was a girl. Since this Brahmin comes to the Pañcāla capital, he is certainly being depicted as an urban Brahmin, whose own source for his "story" is ultimately Bṛhaspati. From what we have learned from Bronkhorst's depiction of the early Cārvākas, this is enough circumstantial evidence to look further into what Draupadī has to say, and what Yudhiṣṭhira has to say about what she says. I limit discussion to four things. First, I will delineate what I believe are two dimensions of Draupadī's alleged heresy that emerge from this spousal dialogue. Second, to the extent that this heresy would appear to be about a divinity (or two) whom neither speaker decisively names, other than as the Placer and the Ordainer, we have the question of who they appear to be talking about. Third is the question of the nature of this heresy[60]—that is,

58. See Tokunaga 2009*a*, 28, and for discussion, chapter 5 § C.

59. See Malinar 2007*b*, 89, noting Yudhiṣṭhira's use of the prefix *ati-*, signifying what is "excessive," "too much," or (in his eyes) "deviant," as in this verse qualifying her "doubts."

60. Malinar's discussion of "Draupadī the heretic" (2007*b*, 86–88) is, I believe, too concessive to Yudhiṣṭhira, and does not find that Draupadī has a consistent and respectable point of view. I thus do not think that the debate "combines a symmetry of [gender] representation with a symmetry of female subordination" (91) by, among other things, showing that "[a] *nāstika* queen on the throne is as scandalous as a king turned into a deplorable weakling" (88).

whether it is, or has at least strong shades of, materialism. And fourth, I close with the question of whether such a materialist, or at least quasi-materialist, outlook relates to other things the *Mahābhārata* tells us about Draupadī.

1. The first level of Draupadī's alleged heresy comes out in what she has to say in her "puppet speech" about the Placer: "As wooden puppets are assembled, so are these creatures, king; he makes the body and limbs move" (22). Carrying this idea along with several "string" similes ("like a pearl strung on a string" among them), and remarking that creatures can be pushed along (*preritāḥ*) by the Lord to heaven or hell (24–25, 27), she builds up to this:

> So all beings come under the Placer's sway. Adjoined to noble or again wicked acts, the Lord, penetrating beings, moves them, and he is not perceived. This body they call the "field" is the Placer's mere instrument (*hetumātram*) by which the Lord causes action that has good or bad fruit. Behold this magical prowess as it is done by a Lord who kills beings with beings, having bewildered (*mohayitvā*) (them) with his own magic. . . . Having made a disguise, Yudhiṣṭhira, the god Bhagavān, the Self-Existent Great Grandfather hurts creatures with creatures. Joining them together and disjoining them, doing as he will, the Lord Bhagavān plays (*krīḍate*) with beings like a child with playthings (*krīḍanakair*). The Placer does not act toward beings like a father or mother. He seems to act out of fury (*roṣād*). He is like another person (*yathā ayam itaro janaḥ*). (3.31.28–37)

Janaḥ in the singular could also be taken collectively: "This one is like other people," "folk." Let us note that even after Yudhiṣṭhira has mentioned heresy, Draupadī does not change her tune that the body is an instrument (*kāraṇam*) by which the Placer, now as the Great Lord (Maheśvara), makes powerless beings move along (*prerayati*) enjoined to this or that task (33.21–22).

Of the two dimensions of Draupadī's heresy, Yudhiṣṭhira seems least interested in this one, probably getting to it only toward the end of his response when he reminds Draupadī of her birth, ostensibly to illustrate the principle that acts bear fruit:

> So it is in you: recall your birth, Kṛṣṇā, as it is heard (*yathā śrutam*); and you know also how the ardent Dhṛṣṭadyumna [her brother] was born. This is a sufficient analogy, sweet smiling woman. [Knowing that] "Of action, there is fruit (*karmaṇām phalam astīti*)," the wise man is content with even a little. . . . Fruition of both meritorious and wicked acts and their origin and disappearance are mysteries of the gods (*devaguhyāni*), beautiful woman. Nobody knows them, these

> creatures *are* bewildered about them. They are guarded by the gods; surely the gods' magic is hidden (*rakṣāṇyetāni devānāṃ gūḍhamāyā hi devatā*). (32.30–31, 33–34)

Yudhiṣṭhira thus grants that beings are bewildered, but not as puppets of a puppeteer. He rather suggests that the best karmic option for beings is to make up a bewildered audience to the mysteries of the gods. If he is bothered by the puppeteer heresy, it is not much. Rather, he concludes with a ringing endorsement not only of the ontology of acts but of *dharma* and of everything the Placer does as the "supreme deity":

> Resolving that "Everything *is*" (*sarvam astīti*), set free your heretical heart (*nāstikyaṃ bhāvam utsṛja*)! Do not revile the Placer, the Lord of the beings. Learn of him, bow to him. Let not your *buddhi* be like this. Do not, O Kṛṣṇā, censure in any way the supreme deity (*uttamaṃ daivatam*) by whose grace a devoted (*bhakta*) mortal attains immortality! (32.38c–40)

Draupadī's birth from an earthen altar, just after her brother Dhṛṣṭadyumna's birth from fire, is frequently cited as something known to the principal epic characters. So Yudhiṣṭhira can remind her of it as one of the "mysteries of the gods" while turning the conversation also to the workings of karma.[61] We can understand why Draupadī might have a sense that she is buffeted around like a puppet. There would be a certain experiential quality to Draupadī's heretical heart or disposition (*bhāva*) on this point, since one of her birth-given names, Pāñcālī, means not only a daughter of Pañcāla but evokes a word for "marionette."[62]

But if the puppeteer heresy is more Draupadī's problem and does not much bother Yudhiṣṭhira, it is the other way around with her second heresy, which gets to the core of Yudhiṣṭhira's self-understanding. Virtually the first thing he says in response is, "My mind is beholden to *dharma* by its own nature (*svabhāvāt*), Kṛṣṇā" (3.32.4). We have seen the second dimension of Draupadī's heresy taking shape in their conversation about the fruition of karma.

61. On this precise double frame of reference as the basis for Janamejaya's last question in the *Mahābhārata*, see Austin 2009 and discussion in chapter 12.

62. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 438. We also know that her birth was coordained (*vi-√dhā*) by Śiva and Nārāyaṇa. This was supposed to be a "secret of the gods" (*Mbh* 1.189) communicated by Vyāsa to her father, but Yudhiṣṭhira seems to be intimating the news had gotten around. He learns at the epic's end that Draupadī was "fashioned (*nirmitā*) for your [his] pleasure's sake (*ratyartham*) by the Trident-Bearer" (18.4.10cd). Draupadī's creation out of a sacrifice by the gods has a counterpart in Tilottamā (*Mbh* 1.201–4), whom the gods fashion from beautiful bits of this and that to cause a rivalry between two demon brothers so they will regulate their polyandrous marriage with Draupadī. That the gods can fashion females as "mere instruments" to their higher ends could also be a reading of Durgā's birth in the *Devī Māhātmyā*.

What exercises Yudhiṣṭhira is what Draupadī says last, condemning the Placer (39)—whom she has already said "is like another person" or "other folk" (3.31.37)—before asking a question with two possible conclusions:

> Having given prosperity to the Dhārtarāṣṭra [Duryodhana] who transgresses the noble treatises, is cruel, greedy, and unrespectful of *dharma*, what fruit does the Placer eat (*dhātā kiṃ phalam aśnute*)? If karma done pursues its doer and not another, then surely the Lord is stained (*lipyate*) by the wicked karma he has done. Or if the wicked karma done does not pursue its doer, then mere power is the cause here, and I grieve for weak people. (3.31.40–42)

It is true that one would not always want to translate the idiom "*phalam* √*aś*" as "eat the fruit" every time it is used with karma.[63] But Draupadī is definitely being literal, for even after Yudhiṣṭhira has mentioned heresy, she comes back to this image with unmistakable clarity in her only reference to both the Placer and Ordainer since she opened this topic saying "Glory be" to them. Having first mentioned the example of babies sucking their mother's breast (33.4) to show that all beings obtain livelihood from what they do, she says:

> All beings know exertion, Bhārata, and visibly, having the world as witness (*lokasākṣikam*), they eat the fruit of their actions (*phalam aśnanti karmaṇām*). I see that creatures live off their own total effort (*svaṃ samutthānam*), even the Placer and Ordainer, as does this crane in the water. (33.6–7)[64]

Draupadī's words here show a materialist bent, for in philosophical terms, she is, like a materialist, stating that "visible evidence" or "perception" (*pratyakṣa*) is implicitly her standard (*pramāṇam*) for knowledge. Nor would she be contradicting herself by mentioning deities, since Indian materialism does not require atheism.[65] Moreover, Draupadī may also be extending or widening her materialism to include the Jain notion that one is stained by one's karma, which, unlike Brahmanical notions, involves a *material* concept of karma. She has stood her ground against Yudhiṣṭhira's claim that "having the world as witness" (*lokasākṣikam*) is for the fool who pleasures his senses and is confused about everything else (32.16), and she has not given in to his interpretation of karma's fruition through hidden divine forces. Not only does she want effort.

63. Van Buitenen has "What does the Placer gain?" (1975, 281); Hill has "What advantage does the Placer gain?" (2001, 171). Cf. "they eat the fruit of their actions" for the second usage quoted below (van Buitenen 1975, 283).

64. Draupadī's mention of the crane here was cited in chapter 9 § D.2.c with reference to Dharma's pre-Yakṣa crane disguise.

65. The Vedic god Bṛhaspati, said to have authored their *sūtra*, would have to be "material."

She wants to *see* results! Note that later in this exchange, Draupadī fits these ideas to counsel that we could expect from a materialist urban Brahmin, telling Yudhiṣṭhira that "the success of houses and cities is caused by man (*agāranagarāṇāṃ hi siddhiḥ puruṣahaitukī*)" (3.33.24cd).

Such materialism would be heresy enough, and that is what appears to bother Yudhiṣṭhira when he defends his innate bent toward *dharma*[66] and turns the conversation from one about the unseen fruits of karma, action, about which he seems not to have convinced her, to one about the unseen "fruits of *dharma*" (*dharmaphala*; 3.32.2, 4–5; cf. 29, 36–37). He defends the Placer and *dharma* together (*dhātāraṃ dharmam eva ca*; 32.14b) for establishing the "Ṛṣis' standard (or authority)" (*ārṣaṃ pramāṇam*; 20a), without which "the universe would sink into foundationless darkness (*apratiṣṭhe tamasi*)" (23cd). Clearly the text is allowing the Ṛṣis' standard established by the Placer and *dharma* to trump Draupadī's standard of perception, but both are evoked as respectable philosophical positions. Yudhiṣṭhira has been speaking like a good theist Mīmāṃsaka[67] in seeing divinity behind the spiritual fruits of *dharma*. But in rising to such a defense of *dharma*, which is also an expedient self-defense, Yudhiṣṭhira is again indirect at best in addressing Draupadī's heresy. No doubt he wants to assure her that since *his* acts flow from his innate bent toward *dharma*, they would not stain *him*. But Draupadī has been talking about a stain on the Placer. Who is he—at least for now, to these two speakers?

2. In mentioning mainly the Placer, Draupadī and Yudhiṣṭhira seem to be talking about Brahmā, at least in using some of his epithets. But Draupaḍī also uses the names Bhagavān, Īśvara,[68] and Maheśvara, which have wider and more devotional ambience;[69] and Yudhiṣṭhira thinks of the Placer as

66. Kṛṣṇa confirms this *svabhāva* of Yudhiṣṭhira at *Mbh* 3.180.18, and, as we saw in chapter 9, his father Dharma confirms that Yudhiṣṭhira *is* Dharma.

67. See Bailey 1983*a*, 155 n. 60: Yudhiṣṭhira's view "corresponds in essence to the view maintained in the Brāhmaṇas and amongst the Mīmāṃsākas (as the doctrine of *apūrva*) that the result of a sacrifice is invisible, that it only occurs after death with the attainment of heaven."

68. Malinar speaks of the Placer and Ordainer among "the *īśvaras*, the lords who rule over the fruits of one's efforts" (2007*b*, 87), going on to speak of them as the "hidden lords" mentioned where Yudhiṣṭhira says, "the gods' magic is hidden" (89–90, citing 3.32.33–34 [see above]). But while there are thirteen usages in the dialogue of *īśvara* in the singular, several of them explicitly referring to Dhātṛ (31.20, 24–25, 27–28; 32.27–28, 39; 33.19), the only usage of "lords" in the plural occurs where Yudhiṣṭhira is speaking about "the Ṛṣis, gods, Gandhavas, Asuras, and Rākṣasas" as "lordly beings (*īśvarāḥ*)" who follow *dharma* knowing that the Placer is the "giver of [its] fruits" (*phaladam . . . dhātāram*) (32.27–28).

69. Bailey, Hill, and Biardeau agree that Draupadī and Yudhiṣṭhira seem to be talking about Brahmā. For Bailey, Dhātṛ "is really Brahmā in his ordaining role"—a "conclusion strengthened by the fact that two of Brahmā's most common epithets—Svayambhū and Prapitāmaha—are named here" (1983*a*, 151 and n. 47). Cf. Hill 2001, 176. Yet that does not account for names like Bhagavān, Īśvara, and Maheśvara. More solid is Biardeau's local contextualization. She thinks Draupadī and Yudhiṣṭhira may be talking at cross-purposes: she, about Brahmā with reference to early Upaniṣadic ideas of *brahman* in relation to the abandonment of rites, "even if Yudhiṣṭhira remains faithful precisely to rites" (2002, 1: 439). For Draupadī, Dhātṛ is "no doubt Brahmā,

"the supreme deity (*uttamaṃ daivatam*) by whose grace a devoted mortal attains immortality." It has been suggested that when the Placer and Ordainer are named in situations of misfortune, it is as if the speakers are reluctant to blame their personally chosen grace-bestowing highest deity by name.[70] In such a world two characters could be talking about the same or different deities in a way that each might or might not understand. Draupadī's story about the Placer comes from Bṛhaspati, who, as we have seen, gets a reputation as chaplain of the Vedic gods for having composed a materialist *sūtra*. There are also Jain and Buddhist texts that mock the idea of a creator god.[71] The *Mahābhārata* does not openly cite heterodox texts (real or imaginary), but here it seems to do so covertly, under a Vedic cover and in a woman's voice! Draupadī is particularly out of sorts at this point, and is openly fed up with Yudhiṣṭhira. But she would also have reasons to be fed up with a divine plan that has put her through her ordeal at the dicing and now "placed" her in the forest where she is the most discomfited, being a woman, of all those beginning their years of exile (Biardeau 2002, 1: 437). If she would have a complaint about the Placer, then what about a god whom she has asked, shortly before this on Kṛṣṇa's first visit to the exiled Pāṇḍavas: "You are the lord of all beings, both divine and human. Then how was it that a woman like me, wife to the Pārthas, sister of Dhṛṣṭadyumna, your friend (*tava . . . sakhī*), Kṛṣṇa, came to be dragged into the hall?"[72]

It could thus be that Yudhiṣṭhira is heading Draupadī off, implicitly, from speaking ill of her friend Kṛṣṇa, that grand illusionist who will tell Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, "The Lord of all beings resides in the region of the heart, Arjuna, making all beings reel, mounted to a device (*yantra*) by his power of illusion" (*BhG* 18.61)—which has reminded the philosopher Śankara of a

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who personifies the *brahman* that her husband Dharmarāja has invoked here" (437–38)—referring to Yudhiṣṭhira's prior statement that "Patience is *brahman* (*kṣanti brahma*)" (3.30.37–41), which could well have triggered Draupadī's *im*patience. But Biardeau limits her contextualization to just this passage: "We are still not in the problematic of the *Bhagavad Gītā* here . . ." (424, n. 6). Yes, the *Bhagavad Gītā* is yet to happen, but the point is unrealistically preemptive as regards readers.

70. I find Hill suggestive on usages of the names Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ "where the context is one of misfortune, adversity or grief. Where these abstractions are apparent epithets for the great Gods, it is as if devotees, reluctant to directly blame their chosen conception of the divine, preferred to have recourse to a barely disguised epithet" (2001, 366). Cf. Biardeau (as cited in the previous note); Malinar 2007, 86: Yudhiṣṭhira "does not deal directly with her line of thought."

71. See Chattopadhyaya [1959] 1973, 496–97; Embree 1988, 80–82 (the ninth-century CE *Mahāpurāṇa*, a Jaina text). Cf. chapter 6 at n. 9 on the Buddhist *Brahmajāla Sutta*.

72. *Mbh* 3.13.52c–53. In an interpolated verse just before this after 13.46, she says, "With Brahmā, Śaṃkara, Śakra and so forth, with the hosts of gods again and again, you sport like a child with playthings (*krīḍāse tvaṃ . . . bālaḥ krīḍanakair iva*)" (3.55*). With the same last *pāda* (in boldface) as 3.31.36d, the insertion (found only in the Vulgate and one Kāśmīri ms.) looks like a backreading from 3.31.36, taking the latter to imply Kṛṣṇa. 3.55* could be taken to say that even the gods are among the playthings, which could be implied by 3.31.36 as well.

puppet play.[73] Yudhiṣṭhira could have reasons to hear Draupadī's words that way. When she was summoned to the gambling hall, menstruating and in a single garment, he would have heard her say,

> So now the All-Ordainer disposed (*vyadadhāt saṃvidhātā*), touching both who are touched, the wise and the fool. He said, "In this world *dharma* is alone supreme." Protecting, he will dispose peace. (*Mbh* 2.60.13)

Her words are the epic's single mention of the All-Ordainer, who seems to cover for both the Placer and the Ordainer, and to leave open the possibility that she is talking about Kṛṣṇa.

In fact, there are vivid echoes between Draupadī's "heresy" and Kṛṣṇa's words with his other special friend Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gītā*: the subject of our next chapter. Like Draupadī, who protests the point, Arjuna hears that he should consider himself a "mere instrument" (*BhG* 11.33) of a god on whom everything is "strung like heaps of pearls on a string" (7.7). Indeed, she says things that would rather defy the *Gītā*. Whereas Draupadī says, "The Placer does not act toward beings like a father or mother. He seems to act out of fury. He is like another person," Kṛṣṇa says, "I am the father of this universe, the mother, the Placer, the grandfather" (9.17). When Draupadī asks, "What fruit does the Placer eat?" that might either stain him or leave people powerless before mere power, Kṛṣṇa says, "I eat" (*aśnāmi*) whatever is offered to me with *bhakti*—"a leaf, a flower, a fruit (*phala*), or water"—so as to free devotees from the good or bad fruits (*phala*) of binding karma (9.26–28), while Arjuna sees him with crushed heads stuck between his teeth (11.27). Kṛṣṇa would not confirm Draupadī's proposition that "the Lord is stained by the wicked karma he has done," since he says, "The four-*varṇa*-system was created by me with distinctions as to qualities and acts (*karmas*). Even though I am its doer, know me as the unchanging non-doer. Acts do not stain me (*na māṃ karmāṇi limpanti*); I have no yearning for the fruits of acts. Whoever comprehends me thus is not bound by acts" (4.13–14).

3. As we have seen, Bronkhorst considers the materialists to have been motivated above all by their opposition to doctrines of karmic retribution and

73. Edgerton notes, "As puppets in a puppet play, according to Śankara's plausible suggestion" (1952, 190). Draupadī speaks of "wooden puppets" (*dārumayī yoṣā*; 3.31.22a); Kṛṣṇa of what is "mounted to a *yantra* by *māyā*" (*yantrārūḍhāni māyayā*). *Yantra* itself seems to imply "puppet" where Saṃjaya tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra that man is not independent in doing good or bad acts but "is caused to act like a wooden device (*kāryate dāruyantravat*)" (5.156.14; cf. van Buitenen 1978, 475: "helplessly manipulated like a wooden puppet"). Before this, well aware that Kṛṣṇa is *the* decisive ally to have on one's side, Dhṛtarāṣṭra says, with I think suggestive irony, "Man is lordless/powerless (*anīśvara*) in prosperity and adversity, like a wooden puppet strung on a string (*sūtraprotā dārumayīva yoṣā*); he is (put) under the sway of fate by the Placer. . . . I cannot abandon my son. Where *dharma* is there is victory" (5.39.1a–c, 7cd).

to the idea of another world, heaven. In looking at how Draupadī handles these issues, we see that the two dimensions of her heresy—her "puppet story" and her inference that the Placer is stained by his own karma—are complementary. Draupadī does have ideas about karma, but she hedges on them. In saying, "This body they call the 'field' is the Placer's mere instrument (*hetumātram*) by which the Lord causes action that has good or bad fruit" (3.31.30), she draws no connection between karma and any kind of "soul." Then she puts her ideas on *karma* in the conditional and frames them in Jain-sounding material terms: "If karma done pursues its doer and not another, then surely the Lord is stained (*lipyate*) by the wicked karma he has done. Or if the wicked karma done does not pursue its doer, then mere power is the cause here, and I grieve for weak people" (3.31.40–42). On *karma*, then, it seems that we could legitimately say that Draupadī has some materialist reservations, which she airs in these particular terms because she has been drawn into a theistic "proto-Sāṃkhya" frame of reference typical of the *Mahābhārata*—including, of course, the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Regarding heaven, again, she does accommodate herself to notions of another world, saying that the Lord pushes people to heaven or hell (31.24–25, 27). But here too she uses the very mechanical, and plausibly materialistic, imagery of the Placer as a puppeteer moving his playthings around with strings attached. She concedes to Yudhiṣṭhira that one can talk about these things, but he is the only one to have positive and affirmative things to say about them. But where she concedes nothing and is consistent throughout, and most in opposition to Yudhiṣṭhira, is that "perception" is her standard.

4. We come, then, to the question of whether this materialist side to Draupadī rings true of other things the epic tells us about her. On the most solid side of what Brahmanical philosophies call matter (*prakṛti*), she is born from an earthen altar and given a name that implies "Puppet."[74] At the other end of the spectrum of *prakṛti*, we find her associated at times with matter's most subtle evolute, the *buddhi* or "intellect." Instances of this association are especially pronounced in the dialogue with Yudhiṣṭhira. As has been cited, Yudhiṣṭhira tells her, "Let not your *buddhi* be like this. Do not, O Kṛṣṇā, censure in any way the supreme deity (*uttamaṃ daivatam*) by whose grace a devoted (*bhakta*) mortal attains immortality" (32.40). From the beginning of their dialogue, they set out their differences as a matter of two intellects, and repeatedly use the term *buddhi* with nuances that range from "intellect" to "mind" to "mental attitude," implying the possibility of differentiating their philosophical positions. Yudhiṣṭhira begins to meet Draupadī's challenge by linking her with "those of slow intellect" (*mandabuddhi*; 3.32.9). But soon he

74. This paragraph is indebted to, and, I would suggest, can be read beside, Butler 1993.

wants to change her mind: "Let not your *buddhi* be like this" (32.39), signaling that he intends a reasoned debate, one in which not only should she consider his words but he must be willing to weigh her charge that his mind was overtaken by the "spirit (*buddhi*) of gambling" (31.18cd). He is thus intellectually engaged when Draupadī moves on from his riposte to challenge him to "rising up" or "exertion" (*utthānam*, *samutthānam*; 33.6–7, 53)[75] by arguing that "it is the mind (*buddhi*) to act that is extolled"—from which she goes on to speak of the fatalist as *sudurbuddhi*, of very bad intellect, and the "believer in chance" (*haṭhabuddhir*) as one who is disposed to just getting by (33.11–13). Eventually she builds to her last word on the subject: she wants him to be "resolute on his own with his intellect in front (*buddhipūrvaṃ svayaṃdhīraḥ*)" (33.23c). Their differences thus include an airing of contending philosophical outlooks—fatalism and belief in chance having now been mentioned. As a materialist, however, Draupadī can thus speak for the *buddhi* as primal matter's subtlest aspect. If so, this would be in accord with Yudhiṣṭhira's final tribute to her after she has passed away: that she was "the great dark one endowed with intellectual substance" (*bṛhatī śyāmā buddhisattvaguṇānvitā*).[76] Aware of the strings attached, from birth to death, not consecutively but when she comes on stage in bits and pieces, Draupadī performs a biography of matter.

Finally, let us tie some things from these last two chapters together. When Yudhiṣṭhira was leaving this world, his very last thought was that he wanted to ask Draupadī a question, only to learn that she had returned to her divine nature as the goddess Śrī.[77] Whatever Yudhiṣṭhira wanted to ask Draupaḍī, the poet leaves it for us to imagine. But it is probably fair to say that he wanted to round off some old debate with that "lady pandit" who could engage him like none other. In Rāma's case we have a far vaster question: Someone told him it would be beneficial for him to hear two boys recite a poem, which turns out to be about him. Then shortly after the boys have begun, Sītā enters the earth, rejecting the opportunity Rāma has offered for their reunion. Would what was beneficial for Rāma have included his listening to the fading voice of Sītā? And if so, would he have listened as one who finally understood his own divinity, or—more interestingly—as a just and perfect man?

75. As discussed in chapter 9 § D.2.c, this is one of five instances where Yudhiṣṭhira's "rising up" is made prominent at highly dramatic moments. The same verb is also used to describe Draupadī when she rises up from the earthen altar (*vedi*) of her birth (1.55.41; 5.80.21).

76. See Hiltebeitel 2007*a*, 110, 133–35, with background for this interpretation in the "three unborns" of *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 4.6–7; cf. 2001*a*, 272–73, on other possible translations, beginning with "the great dark one rich in spirit, character, and virtue."

77. *Mbh* 18.4.8–10; see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 276.

11

Dharma and the *Bhagavad Gītā*

This chapter will work toward understanding the way *dharma* is presented in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. In part because the *Gītā* allows us to proceed from the relatively familiar to the relatively less so, it will allow us to bring greater clarity to the *Mahābhārata*'s new formulations of temporally oriented *dharma* that we opened discussions on in chapters 6 and 7 in contrasting the epic's and *Manu*'s treatments of *yugas* and *kalpas*. We may keep these contrasting treatments in mind, as we will be returning to them toward this chapter's end. But I begin by contrasting some of the *Bhagavad Gītā*'s more basic formulations with *Manu*'s treatment of the same terms: the limits and specificities of the concepts of *svadharma*, *svakarma*, *svabhāva* taken as a set,[1] and also *karmayoga*. This will bring out how the epic, and especially the *Bhagavad Gītā*, figure the Kṣatriya most pivotally in these formulations. Then, by exploring how the *Bhagavad Gītā* is contextualized in the wider *Mahābhārata* and tracing in particular one of its "ripple effects" through a formula that relates *dharma* and victory to Kṛṣṇa, I will demonstrate how the *Gītā* itself presents *dharma* through a ring structure. We will thus be able to look more closely at what the *Bhagavad Gītā* (henceforth, in this chapter, *BhG* or *Gītā*) brings to the topic of *dharma* over time for the warrior as distinct from the king. And we will set some terms for the exploration of the wider *Mahābhārata*'s treatment of *dharma* and *bhakti* in chapter 12.

1. Regarding usages of *svabhāva*, it would seem a plausible hypothesis that, in developing their position of "realism," the Sarvāstivādins, a predominantly north central and northwest Indian school, could have had overlapping concerns with the *Mahābhārata*, including the *Gītā*, and other roughly contemporary Brahmanical texts in shoring up what they meant by *dharma* and *dharmas*. Cf. chapter 4 § B.2.b.

A. *Svadharma* and *Svakarma*: Qualities, Merits, and Virtues

As brought out in chapter 5, *Manu*'s crypto-narrative orchestration of the relation between the Snātaka and the king is one of many attempts to address a larger problem that was crucial to Brahmanical culture in the way it distinguished itself from the heterodoxies: the relation between the Brahmin and the king, who *should* be a Kṣatriya. Theorizing the relation between the Brahmin and the Kṣatriya, with the king as a kind of linchpin, was the key to offering *dharma* as an all-encompassing Brahmanical social order. And the key to the theory itself was the concept of *svadharma*.

In his article "On the Rhetoric and Semantics of the Puruṣarthas," Charles Malamoud provides an elegant extraction of this theory at the beginning of an appendix titled "On the Correspondence between the Puruṣārthas the Varṇas and the Āśramas":

> What provides the foundation for Brahman superiority is the fact that their svadharma is of the same nature as dharma in general. Their specialty in the code is to hold the keys to the code; they watch over and judge the whole of the svadharma. This peculiar affinity that the Brahmans have for dharma is derived from their alone being qualified to teach vedic texts which are the ultimate source of dharma; they are also alone in being allowed to officiate in śrauta ceremonies; their actual presence and direct influence are indispensable for what is the essential part of dharma—sacrifice. (Malamoud 1982, 49)

This formulation is impeccable in placing *svadharma* at the foundation of Brahmins' theoretical primacy, and with it the matter of Brahmins' "qualifications"—which, let us begin to note, imply special "qualities"—for jobs open only to themselves as Veda specialists who would indeed have motivation to make (and keep) sacrifice "the essential part of dharma." It is, however, a synchronic distillation from many texts, and when we look at the texts, we see that even there it is something of an illusion, especially where it comes to such a notion as "the whole of the svadharma." The texts' authors may have had such a synthesis in the back of their minds, but the texts themselves are far more complex, varied, incomplete, and revealing in making the points that might at most only suggest such an orderly statement. This is particularly the case in two areas where such a synchronic view of *svadharma* has given rise to unwarranted generalizations and extensions: that *svadharma* applies in principle to all humans individually and equally in every walk of life; and that it pertains to all humans individually and equally as well as to suprahuman entities.

The first generalization breaks down when one begins to notice how the notion of *svadharma* is developed in association with Brahmin jobs, which, as we shall see, are usually discussed not under the heading of *dharma* but rather under that of *karma* as "suitable occupations" (*svakarma*), and with new configurations of "qualities," "merits," and "virtues." It is within this novel discourse, which does not extend back to older meanings of *dharma*, that Fitzgerald can generalize about *dharma* in the *Mahābhārata* as "being a species of *karman*" (2004*b*, 676; cf. 679, 682, 684 n. 12) based on its having three "layers" of meaning: normative and especially sacrificial action (*karman*) (with Fitzgerald emphasizing that such action is beneficial to a person after death); a more abstract ethical "'*quality* of the correctness, rightness, goodness, or justice' of some action"; and "the inner attributes (*guṇas*) of a person" (674–75).

The second generalization only builds out from the tenuous premises that allow the first one. As was noted in chapter 3, it has encouraged an unwarranted backreading of the way "each [Ṛgvedic] god follow[s] the law proper to his own being, in other words his own *dharman*" (Miller 1985, 102). As we shall see in the next section, it has also been pushed forward into classical Hinduism as a cosmic synchronic principle that can be applied most anywhere, often with little or no warrant from the texts.

Yet *svadharma* has somehow "become what it is."[2] As far as I can see, the term gets its first workout, together with *svakarma*, in the *dharmasūtras*, where a kind of semantic drift between the two terms is set in motion; and the two are then further developed as governing paradigms in *Manu* and the *Mahābhārata*, where they are harnessed, for the *Mahābhārata* at least in the *BhG*,[3] to what I consider to be two different notions of *karmayoga*.[4] The *Rāmāyaṇa* knows these terms, but uses them less intensively. In the case of *svadharma*, this is probably because it projects an earlier world where the social classes are harmonious. There is less need to shore up matters of *svadharma* (which it rarely mentions) since class-mixture does not really exist. The only two usages of the term for "mixture" or "confusion" (*saṃkara*) are preemptive: there *was* no class-mixture when Rāma's father ruled (*Rām* 1.6.12), and Rāma goes into exile holding to his father's truth to prevent the world from falling "into confusion" (2.101.6). His killing of the upstart Śūdra Śambūka is likewise a preemptive strike against a form of class-mixture: according to the Ṛṣi Nārada, who puts Rāma to this task,

2. Recall that the compound *svadharman* has one occurrence in the *Ṛgveda* at *ṚV* 3.21.2b, where it seems to ask Agni as the ritual fire to bestow what is best "for us" from "his own foundation"—a usage that seems to have no follow-up in the Vedic canon itself, and to be unrelated to a distinctive usage in the *Śrautasūtras* (see chapter 3 § E). According to Gombrich (1985, 436; 1988, 67), this "Hindu notion" seems to have no equivalent in the Pāli canon.

3. See Fitzgerald 2002, 641–42, 47, 650 n. 5.

4. See § C for some recent debate on this issue.

a Śūdra should only be able perform *tapas* in the Kali *yuga*, which is yet to come (7.65.22–23). As to *karmayoga*, there is just one curious instance at 5.45.30 describing Hanumān as *svakarmayoga ca vidhāya*, which Goldman and Sutherland Goldman translate "settling into his own plan of action."

With *svadharma*, we may thus begin to notice a pattern developed in the *dharmasūtras* that *Manu* and the *Gītā* only reinforce. The *dharmasūtras* use the term *svadharma* mainly to prescribe or "legislate," as it were, what is generally appropriate and to be enforced (by the king or, in the *BhG* and in at least the twelfth chapter of *Manu*,[5] by the karmic mechanism of reincarnation) for all the *varṇas* and *āśramas*.[6] But their particular target in prescribing *svadharma* is the classes below the Brahmin (*Ā* 1.18.3)—and especially the Kṣatriya, and still more singularly the Kṣatriya king. Yet when the same Brahmin authors speak specifically of themselves and the privileges and occupations reserved for them, they use instead the term *svakarma*, thereby speaking of their "own actions" or "activities" or "own occupations" rather than their "own *dharma*." And when they speak of other classes' "appropriate actions" or "occupations" (*svakarmas*) instead of their *svadharma*, they tend to do so where the activities of such others would impact directly upon Brahmins: as with what Brahmins can eat that others might offer (*G* 17.1; *B* 1.3.17–18), or where occupations reserved for Brahmins set the paradigm for what other classes may and may not do. As we saw in chapter 5, *Āpastamba*'s treatment of this matter, with three idiosyncratic additions to the basic set of six, sets the tone. Before he lists the occupations of the two Ārya castes below the Brahmin (2.10.6–7), he defines those reserved for the Brahmin first, as follows: "The occupations specific to a Brahmin (*svakarma brāhmaṇasya*) are studying, teaching, sacrificing, officiating at sacrifices, giving gifts, receiving gifts, inheriting, and gleaning, as well as appropriating things that do not belong to anybody" (4–5). The first six of these nine "occupations specific to a Brahmin" become standard (see *M* 10.74–75, cited below; *Mbh* 5.29.26;[7] 7.168.22–23;[8] 12.297.15; 13.129.7–8). The overall implication, as I see it, is that the *svakarma* of Brahmins defines the "archetype" or default position of *dharma* implicitly, without mentioning the term *dharma*, for all Āryas, with only some of their "own actions" or "occupations"—especially giving but not receiving gifts—being

5. See Bronkhorst's notion (in press), cited in chapter 5 n. 76, that *Manu* 12 is late because it is only there that Manu discusses "rebirth as determined by karmic retribution" "to explain the superior status of Brahmins."

6. See *Ā* 2.2.2 (mentioning only *varṇas*); *G* 11.29 (mentioning both). In a passage that Olivelle regards as late, *B* 2.17.4 allows that a man may undertake renunciation (*saṃnyāsa*) if he is a widower or after he has "settled his children in their respective duties."

7. Kṛṣṇa, speaking to Saṃjaya here, mentions additionally that Brahmins should visit *tīrthas*.

8. Dhṛṣṭadyumna, defending his killing of Droṇa, asks which of the six actions (*karmāṇi*) Droṇa fulfilled (see chapter 9).

appropriate for Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas.[9] Meanwhile, in this passage from *Āpastamba* "the Śūdra is purely and simply eliminated, or perhaps there is nothing new to say as regards *varṇa* concerning him." Biardeau says the passage concerns itself with "a Brahmin's *dharma*" (2002, 1: 77), but surprisingly, that term is not even used with regard to Brahmins. Yet the Brahmins' *svakarma* does of course provide those below them with an archetype that models the *svadharma* of Kṣatriyas above all, and others below them, on sacrificial ritual.

Now as we saw in chapter 5, the pivotal figure *for* and *through* whom *dharmasūtra* authors begin to legislate *dharma* for the larger society is the king. *Gautama* has a fine passage on this subject, part of which, now italicized, was quoted in that chapter's discussion of *varṇa* and *āśrama*.

> The king rules over all except Brahmins. He should be correct in his actions and speech, and trained in the triple Veda and logic (*ānvīkṣikī*). Let him be upright,[10] keep his senses under control, surround himself with men of quality [have companions who possess *guṇas*: *guṇavatsahāya*-], and adopt sound policies. He should be impartial to all his subjects and work for their welfare. As he sits on a high seat, all except Brahmins should pay him homage seated at a lower level, and even Brahmins should honor him. *He should watch over the social classes and the orders of life in conformity with their rules, and those who stray he should guide back to their respective duties* [that is, to their *svadharma*, singular], *"for the king," it is stated, "takes a share of their merits (dharmas)."* He should appoint as his personal priest a Brahmin who is learned, born in a good family, eloquent, handsome, mature, and virtuous (*śilasaṃpannam*); who lives according to the rules (*nyāyavṛttam*); and who is austere. He should undertake rites (*karmāṇi*) only with his support, "for a Kṣatriya, when he is supported by a Brahmin," it is said, "prospers and never falters." (*G* 11.1–14)

It is, of course, implied that all the classes and *āśramas* have their *svadharma*, but the focus is on the king's reaping that "cumulative *svadharma*" as merit (*dharma*) for himself. His own *svadharma* is not directly clarified, other than that one may infer it from his being a Kṣatriya. It is not to be confused with the merit (*dharma*) he reaps. In reaping the "merits" (*dharma*) that come from seeing to it that the social classes

9. Early in the *Rājadharma* section of *Mahābhārata* Book 12, where Bhīṣma first treats the four *varṇas* at length (12.60.6–35), he mentions the six in terms of the three each that Kṣatriyas can and cannot do (13c–14a), having stated that the *dharma* or "virtue" solely ordained for Brahmins is *dama* or "restraint," which goes along with their teaching and recitation of the Vedas (8c–9).

10. *Śūci*, which Olivelle also sometimes translates as "pure," "clean"; for extended discussion, see Olivelle 2005*b*, 220–29.

and orders of life do not stray from their *svadharma*,[11] the king should keep his own senses under control, implying the mastery of ethical values that have come by the time of the later Upaniṣads and the emergence of the heterodoxies to be associated with renunciation, yoga, and the reduction of violence. Under the impact of the new renunciatory and yogic ethics, a new concatenation of merits, virtues, and qualities is thus coming to be indexed by increasingly interchangeable usages of the terms *dharma* and *guṇa* ("quality" or "attribute":),[12] along with which we must also mention *puṇya* ("merit"), to characterize people who are virtuous or moral (*śīlasaṃpannam*). In their overlap, all three terms can carry karmic momentum and transferability. But though one may generalize, they also operate in somewhat different contexts.

With *dharma*, *Manu*'s sixth chapter on the *āśramas* uses the term to define the set of virtues that makes up the "Ten-Point Law" that achieves the highest aim for the four life-stages, the last two of which, above all, would call for the mainly yogic and renunciatory virtues now mentioned while discussing those two most life-fulfilling *āśramas*:

> Twice-born men belonging to these four *āśramas* must always observe the ten-point Law diligently. Resolve, forbearance, self-control (*dama*), refraining from theft, performing purifications, mastering the organs, understanding, learning, truthfulness, and suppressing anger. . . . Those Brahmins who learn the ten points of Law, and, after learning, follow them, attain the highest state. (*M* 6.91–93)

With the addition of *ahiṃsā*, this list is boiled down with regard to the four *varṇas*, where perhaps there is a need to be more basic:

> Abstention from injuring (*ahiṃsā*), truthfulness, refraining from anger (variant: not stealing), purification, and mastering the organs—this, Manu has declared, is the gist of the Law for the four classes. (*M* 10.63)

Lists of virtues like this can be rather ad hoc.[13] The *Mahābhārata*'s instructions on *Rājadharma* offer a half-equivalent list of ten *dharmas*, mentioning

11. His role of dealing with those who "stray" (√*cal*) is presented even more starkly in *Manu*, where it is a question specifically of the king's need to apply punishment (*daṇḍa*) (which *Gautama* deals with subjacently [11.28ff.]): "It is the fear of him that makes all beings, both the mobile and the immobile, accede to being used (*bhogāya kalpante*: literally, being enjoyed, eaten) and to not deviate (√*cal*) from the Law proper to them (*svadharmāt*: from their *svadharma*)" (*Manu* 7.15).

12. The *Mahābhārata* orchestrates interchangeable usages of the compounds *sarvaguṇopeta* ("endowed with every quality") and *sarvadharmopeta* ("endowed with every virtue" or "merit") in many narratives that describe combinations of yogic and royal virtues of kings and queens (Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 192–228).

13. See Ganeri 2007, 231–36 on *Mbh* 12.156.22–26 as Bhīṣma's teaching to Yudhiṣṭhira of thirteen virtues of truth, and *BhG* 16.1–4, where Kṛṣṇa mentions truth (*satya*) among twenty-six virtues that "comprise the divine complement of virtues of him who is born to it." The thirteen virtues of truth differ from the thirteen *sādhāraṇa dharmas* soon thereafter mentioned by Bhīṣma, which are headed by noncruelty (12.285.23–24; see chapter 5 § E).

nine (including sharing, begetting offspring on one's own wife, and supporting one's dependents) as pertinent to all *varṇas,* but reserving self-control or restraint (*dama*) as the *dharma* exclusive to Brahmins (*Mbh* 12.60.7–8; see n. 9 above). As we saw in chapter 6 § C, the god Dharma himself has ten wives named after more or less feminine virtues (1.60.13–14); and, after Dharma disguises himself as a Yakṣa to test his son Yudhiṣṭhira, he tells him of ten virtues that are *dharma*'s "bodies" (3.298.7). These are different lists. Only one of Dharma's wives (Dhṛti or Resolve) and three of his bodies (truth, purity, and restraint) coincide precisely with *Manu*'s ten.

Puṇya too is meritorious action especially as regards reaping the fruits of karma,[14] usually in terms of afterworlds, including heaven, that fall short of "the highest state" attainable by *Manu*'s "ten-point Law."[15]

Guṇa, on the other hand, introduces the differential calculus of the three "qualities" (*guṇas*) of matter, the chief ingredients of the soup of life that enable one to distinguish those of "good quality" (*sattvaguṇa*) from the rest. Kṛṣṇa makes the three *guṇas* highly pertinent in his closing instruction to Arjuna in the *BhG*:

> That intelligence (*buddhi*) proceeds from *sattva*, Pārtha, which understands when to act and when not (*pravṛttiṃ ca nivṛttiṃ ca*), what is a task and what not, what is a cause of fear and what not, what is bondage and what deliverance. To *rajas* goes the intelligence with which one incorrectly perceives *dharma* and *adharma*, task and no-task. An intelligence is inspired by *tamas,* Pārtha, when, obscured by darkness, it mistakes *adharma* for *dharma* and perceives all matters topsy-turvy. (*BhG* 18.30–32; van Buitenen 1981, 141 slightly modified)

As one can see, *sattva guṇa* provides the intellect (*buddhi*) with the particular aptitude to differentiate between what the *Nārāyaṇīya* calls *pravṛtti-* and *nivṛtti-dharmas*. Also clarifying that *guṇas* can lead to high soteriological ends, *Manu* exerts considerable energy in showing through six widening iterations how good *guṇas* correlate with favorable reincarnation and the "fruits of action" (12.24–50).

Manu is more interested, however, in demonstrating the social benefits of good *guṇas*. It is to be assumed that the Brahmins whom the king should surround himself with as advisors would have the innately defined "sattvic qualities" or virtuous

14. See *M* 5.53, using *puṇyaphalam*, "the reward for meritorious acts," in this sense afterlife merits. See the similar uses of *puṇya* at 8.90–91 with just *puṇya*). On *puṇyaphala*, note *Ā* 2.14.18, pertaining to a husband and wife; 2.24.13, pertaining to "the bodies of those seers who have done meritorious deeds shining brilliantly far above"—probably referring to the Seven Ṛṣis of the Big Dipper (Olivelle 1999, 372).

15. See the *Uttara-Yāyata*'s story of King Yayāti (*Mbh* 1.81–88) discussed in § C.3.

guṇas that entitle them to their *svakarma*, and to decide others' *dharma*. As Malamoud suggests, in so far as Brahmins have an implied or unstated *svadharma*, it is to be "qualified" innately to "hold the keys to the code." *Manu*'s first chapter moves forward its whole program by relating class and quality (*varṇa* and *guṇa*) to proper conduct (*ācāra*) as "the highest *dharma*" among the "roots of Law":

> In this, the Law has been set forth in full—the good and the bad qualities of actions (*guṇadoṣau ca karmaṇām*) and the timeless norms of social conduct (*ācāra*)—for all four social classes. Proper conduct is the highest Law (*ācāraḥ paramo dharmaḥ*), as well as what is declared by the Veda and given in traditional texts. (1.107–8b, cited above, chapter 5 § D)

Illustrative of the *guṇas*' force as the operational virtues of twice-born men is a fascinating pair of brief stories that *Manu* alludes to together, the second of which would seem to come from the *Mahābhārata*. *Manu*'s purpose is to describe how low-born women may improve their *guṇas* just by their being married to Brahmin husbands. The two stories are about Arundhatī (called Akṣamālā by *Manu*), the wife of the great Ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha, whose story *Manu* could find elsewhere, though I do not know where he would find the twist that Arundhatī is of lowly birth; and Śārṅgī, the wife of Mandapāla (9.22–24). Unless *Manu* made this second story up or knew it from some lost variant, he probably could have found it only in the *Mahābhārata*, where it is a subtale told in the aftermath to the Burning of the Khāṇḍava Forest. The epic calls Mandapāla's wife Jaritā, but *Manu* probably knows her from a version of the epic account or one similar to it, since his name for her, Śārṅgī, refers to the fact that she is a Śārṅgaka bird whom Mandapāla became a bird himself to marry so that he could quickly have children to satisfy his debt to his ancestors.[16] What is fascinating here is that "Manu" puts a totally different twist on the story to make his point that a husband's *guṇas* can elevate those of a wife. Not only does he omit to mention that Mandapāla became a bird himself,[17] and thus at least for the time being was as lowly as Śārṅgī; he cheats Jaritā of being the heroine of the story.[18] *Manu*'s concern that a husband's *guṇas* have such uplifting power is well explained with reference to offspring:

16. On the three debts, see chapter 5 § A in connection with the five great sacrifices; chapter 8 § D and § G in connection with Satyavatī and Pāṇḍu, the latter mentioning four debts.

17. The story is facilitated by the fact that the term *dvija*, "twiceborn," refers to both birds and Brahmins.

18. See Hiltebeitel 2007*a*, 118–23 on the *Śārṅgaka-Upākhyāna*. The *Vaṭṭaka-Jātaka* is a Buddhist parallel (Cowell [1895] 2005, 88–90; see Söhnen-Thieme 2005), but with different names and nothing that could have affected *Manu*.

> If it be asked: who is superior? A child born accidently (*yadṛcchayā*) to a Brahmin man by a non-Ārya woman or a child of a non-Ārya man by a Brahmin woman? This is the resolution: a child born to an Ārya man by a non-Ārya woman becomes an Ārya by reason of his *guṇas*, while a child born to a non-Ārya man is a non-Ārya. Neither of these should be able to receive vedic initiation—that is the settled Law; the former because of the inferiority (*vaiguṇyād*) of his birth and the latter because he was born in the inverse order of class (*pratilomataḥ*). (*M* 10.66–68; Olivelle 2005*a*, 211 slightly modified)

The Brahmin father's son no doubt inherits his father's *guṇas* but is still "without *guṇas*" (*vaiguṇya*) because he has inherited nothing of that sort from his mother. As *Manu* goes on to explain, the father is seed, the mother field (70–72)—a recurrent metaphor that we noticed in chapter 8 with regard to women in the Kuru line (Ambikā and Ambālikā, Kuntī and Mādrī) and shall notice again.

I cannot treat here the considerable number of passages where *Manu* follows suit in speaking mainly of Brahmin *karma* and *svakarma* around the issue of jobs, and of *dharma* and *svadharma* as legislated mainly for others, and particularly Kṣatriyas and Kings.[19] It must suffice to treat the main passage where *Manu* deploys much the same distinctions between *svakarma* and *svadharma* that we have seen in the *dharmasūtras*, but by sharpening them and widening their applications, and then consider his treatment of the *svadharma* of Kṣatriyas. Here are his refinements on "the occupations appropriate to" Brahmins:

> Brahmins who are established in that whose source is the Veda and are devoted to the activity specific to them (*svakarmaṇi*; singular, whereas Olivelle pluralizes it) should duly live by the six occupations (*ṣaṭ karmāṇi*) in their proper order: teaching and studying, offering sacrifices and officiating at sacrifices, giving and accepting gifts are the six occupations of a highest-born person. Of these six activities (*karmas*), however, three provide him with a livelihood: officiating at sacrifices, teaching, and accepting gifts from a completely pure person. From the Brahmin, [these very] three Laws (*trayo dharmā*) are suspended with respect to the Kṣatriya: teaching, officiating at sacrifices, and the third, accepting gifts; the same are suspended also with respect to the Vaiśya—that is the settled rule; for Manu, the Prajāpati, has not prescribed these Laws (*tān dharmān manur āha*) with respect to these two. Use of arms and weapons has been

19. See *M* 1.53; 1.107, 2.183; 4.03; 4.155 ff., 10.1–3; cf. 2.8, 3.3, 3.235, 4.3, 4.155; 5.2, 6.91–93, 6.97, 7.36, 8.41–42, 8.390–91, 9.251, 10.95–97, 11.84.

> prescribed[20] for the Kṣatriya, and trade, animal husbandry, and agriculture for the Vaiśya. Their Law (*dharma*), however, is giving gifts, studying, and offering sacrifices. Among the activities specific to each (*svakarmasu*), the most admirable are: studying the Veda for a Brahmin, protecting the people for a Kṣatriya, and trade for a Vaiśya. When a Brahmin is unable to earn a living by means of the activity [again, singular] specific to him (*svena karmaṇā*) given above, he may live by means of the Kṣatriya Law (*kṣatriyadharmeṇa*). (*M* 10.74–81, Olivelle 2005*a*, 211–12 slightly modified)

The passage follows *Manu*'s presentation on mixed castes, and is clearly meant to define the order that mixed castes must not be allowed to adulterate. Again, it is primarily Brahmins who have *svakarma*. Their *svakarma* is glossed as *dharma* (not *svadharma*) in two contexts: when it prescribes distinctions between the three things Brahmins alone can do and the three that Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas can do along with them; and when, in times of distress, it is "*dharma*" for a Brahmin to adopt Kṣatriyadharma, taking up arms to protect people.

Indeed, *Manu* has by this time defined Kṣatriyadharma fairly carefully:

> When a man is killed in battle with upraised weapons according to the Kṣatriya law (*kṣatradharma*), the settled rule is that for him both a sacrifice (*yajña*) and a purification (*āśaucam*) are accomplished instantly (*sadyaḥ*). (5.98)

This follows from *Manu*'s discussion of the instant purification of kings that we noticed in chapter 5. Moreover, the sacrificial sanction is sustained by a self-sacrificial warrior code:

> When challenged by rivals—whether they are stronger, weaker, or of equal strength—as he protects his subjects, a king must never back away from battle, recalling the Law of Kṣatriyas (*kṣatraṃ dharmam anusmaran*). Refusal to turn back in battle, protecting the subjects, and obedient service to Brahmins—for kings, these are the best means of securing happiness. When kings fight each other in battle, with all their strength, seeking to kill each other and refusing to turn back, they go to heaven (*svargam*). (7.87–89)

And, rounding off this section:

> I have set forth above the eternal Law of warriors (*yodhadharmaḥ sanātanaḥ*) without elaboration. A Kṣatriya must never deviate from this Law (*asmād dharmāt*), as he kills his enemies in battle. (7.98)

20. Olivelle inserts "as the livelihood," but this is only implied.

Now as we saw in chapter 5, where "Manu" establishes the principle that there is "no fifth" class, he does so by emphasizing that teaching is one of the three jobs reserved for Brahmins. He makes this the pretext for positioning the Brahmin as the one who, in times of adversity, defines caste duties across the board:

> The Brahmin must know the means of livelihood of all according to rule, and he should teach them to others and follow them himself. Because of his distinctive qualities, the eminence of his origin, his holding of restrictive practices, and the distinctive nature of his sacrament, the Brahmin is the lord of all the classes. (10.2–3)

This teaching on teaching is, in effect, *Manu*'s answer to the Buddha's question in the *Esukāri Sutta*: "Well, Brahmin, has all the world authorized the Brahmins to prescribe? (*MN* 96.4 and 11; see chapter 4 § A). *Manu*'s insistence that a Brahmin can adopt Kṣatriyadharma is thus especially weighted, suggesting one of the values of "legislating" that prerogative. When *Manu* then discusses the possibility that a Kṣatriya might "dip" to the occupations of a Śūdra, it is with a verse that parallels a famous verse from the *BhG*,[21] where it concerns Kṛṣṇa's guidance of the exemplary Kṣatriya Arjuna:

> Far better to carry out one's own Law (*svadharma*) imperfectly than that of someone else's perfectly; for a man who lives according to someone else's Law (*paradharmeṇa*) falls immediately from his caste. (*Manu* 10.97)

But when it comes to Vaiśyas and Śūdras, although Brahmins may likewise take up their "occupations" in times of distress, there is little interest in calling them *Vaiśya-dharma* and none at all in speaking of *Śūdra-dharma*. *Manu* makes only one mention of *Vaiśyadharma* (10.98) and none of *Śūdradharma*, conceding only that Śūdras can and should follow *dharma* or Law, and implying that, were there such a thing as *Śūdradharma*, it would be only by upward imitation (10.127–28) and not any kind of *svadharma* (cf. 10.50).

Likewise, in the discussion of mixed castes that precedes the main passage on Brahmin occupations, *Manu*—as is well known and for many notorious—also defines mixed castes by their vast array of occupations (10.1–3 and ff.), and very little in terms of *dharma*, much less *svadharma*. In the section on mixed classes (*M* 10.5–73), such groups are ascribed only *svakarma* (10.40, 50). *Svadharma* is never used, and *dharma* is used only five times. Three of these instances state general rules: *Manu*'s rules on mixed class offspring are

21. *BhG* 3.35; see Doniger 1991, 246; also 18.47. But Doniger also mentions *M* 6.66, which is a misleading parallel since it is about *āśramadharma*.

"righteous" (*dharmya*) (10.7); the "delinquent-born" and Śūdras are *sadharmāṇaḥ* ("have the same nature" or "characteristics"; 10.41); the "gist of the Law" for all four classes lies in certain virtues (10.63). And the rest define a Brahmin perspective from the standpoint of their separation: those "who follow *dharma*" must have no contact with two classes of outcastes (10.53); offspring of only one Brahmin parent are denied Vedic initiation (*asaṃskāryau*), whether the father or mother is the Brahmin (10.68). Indeed, it would seem that this dodge has been operating from the beginning of *Manu*, where it can be traced to *Manu*'s frame story. The first usage of "*dharma*" in *Manu* comes when the Ṛṣis ask about "the *dharmas* of those born in between" (1.2). The second, and the first by "Manu" himself, occurs with the assertion that *dharma* and *adharma* were introduced to establish "distinctions among *karmas* (*karmaṇāṃ ca vivekārtham*)" (1.26), implying not only "activities" but a system of job reservations for all above the Śūdra, but especially for Brahmins.

As to the *Mahābhārata*, it must suffice to mention only a few statistics as the basis for further analysis, while citing what Bhīṣma has to say on the subject: first as he introduces *varṇadharma* toward the beginning of his postwar teachings on the *dharma* of kings in Book 12, and then, much later, as he quotes Śiva toward the end of Book 13. In the initial passage, Bhīṣma first treats Brahmins rather cursorily. Having mentioned *dharma* only in the sense of the nine "virtues" pertinent to all *varṇas*, with "restraint" reserved to Brahmins, and having begun with Brahmins' activities as "things to be done" or "duties" (*kāryas*) (12.60.12a), he turns to Kṣatriya *dharma* (13) on the way to making these pronouncements: "They say the *dharma* for those of Kṣatriya connection (*kṣatrabandhūnāṃ dharmam*) is primarily killing; there is nothing more important to do than the destruction of robbers (*dasyus*)" (17); and "for the king in particular who wishes to obtain *dharma*, it is to make war (*rājñā viśeṣeṇa yoddhavyaṃ dharmam īpṣatā*)" (18cd). As one would expect in an epic mostly about Kṣatriyas, *kṣatriyadharma*, which, along with the far more common *kṣatradharma*, occurs by a rough count about 175 times in the Pune Critical Edition (and in every Book except Books 16 and 17). (That compares with 12 times in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where the term "warrior *dharma*" is curiously absent from Book 6, that epic's War Book.) *Vaiśyadharma* and near equivalents occur about 9 times; *śūdradharma* and near equivalents about 6 times (3.149.36, 5.29.24; 12.60.27, 13.128.56 and 58, 13.129.15); and *brāhmaṇadharma* a mere once, at 13.131.8a, where, like the last three references to Śūdradharma, it occurs in a "Dialogue Between Umā and Maheśvara" (*Umā-Maheśvara-Saṃvāda*). Among the many intriguing things the Goddess wants to hear about from Śiva, one topic is the *dharma* of Brahmins (13.128.29a). Śiva focuses his reply on householder Brahmins as "gods on earth" (*bhūmidevāḥ*), for whom he

prescribes fasting, honoring gurus and gods, hearing of mysteries and the observance of Vedic vows, mendicancy, wearing the sacred thread, Veda recitation, *brahmacarya*, returning home from their preceptor's house to marry, avoiding the food of Śūdras, welcoming guests and eating only after all others are served, performing both vegetarian and animal sacrifices while practicing *ahiṃsā*, and generally—in his favorite phrase (used eleven times in this dialogue)—following the "path of the good" (*satpatha*) (13.128.30–45). Meanwhile, what Śiva prescribes for Kṣatriyas, and in particular kings, is to protect subjects, be firm in litigation (*vyavahārasthitir*), and "die in battle, having gone forth on behalf of cows and Brahmins" (13.128.46–52). In this long dialogue, Śiva uses the term *svadharma* only twice: once, in another exception to our rule, to say a Brahmin who falls from his *svadharma* may attain Śūdrahood and go to hell (13.131.12), and just after this to say more or less the same thing about those of all three Ārya *varṇas*. Umā never uses it in answering Śiva's follow-up question about women's *dharma* (13.134.11–29).

B. Who Has *Svadharma*?

At least in the case of *kṣatriya-* or *kṣatra-dharma*, compound uses of *varṇa* + *dharma* do correspond to a *varṇa*'s *svadharma*, and we may infer the same for the other three social classes. But if, in Malamoud's terms, the Brahmins "watch over and judge the whole of the svadharma," they have set a limit on their vigilance. The epic, like *Manu*, makes no such correlation between *dharma* and *svadharma* for further classes of beings. *Svadharma* is restricted to the four *varṇas* only. This comes across quite vividly in a passage that Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty cites on the subject of demons' supposed *svadharma*—one that actually mentions the term. O'Flaherty says it concerns "demons, Rākṣasas, Piśācas, and others" who have "abandoned their *svadharma*" (1976, 68), but it would rather appear that they never had any *svadharmas* to abandon. The passage, from the *Mokṣadharmaparvan* of the epic's twelfth Book, recounts a taut and erudite conversation between two of the great Vedic Brahmins, Bhṛgu and Bharadvāja, in which the origins of *svadharma* would seem to have been woven into a reminiscence of the cosmogony in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.11–14 (see chapters 3 § F and 6 § C). As will be recalled, the Upaniṣad tells how *brahman* was at first alone and "had not fully developed" until it created the "ruling power," Vaiśyas, Śūdras, and the Law (*dharma*) as truth, which made it possible to coordinate the three sub-Brahmin classes to make the Brahmin "the power behind the throne." The passage would seem not only to expand on these notions but also to dissolve them

with typical epic irony in its play on *varṇa* as both “color” and “class,” before reconsolidating and setting limits:

> Bhṛgu said,
> Brahmā the Lord of Creatures first created Brahmins, who were produced from his own radiance (*tejas*), their splendor like the Sun and Agni. The Lord then ordained (*vidadhe*) truth, *dharma*, austerity (*tapas*), the eternal Veda, and pure conduct (*ācāraṃ caiva śaucam*) for attaining heaven. Gods, Demons (Dānavas, Daityas, and Asuras), Gandharvas, Great Snakes, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, Nāgas, Piśacas, and also Men—Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras—and whatever other groups there are among Beings, O best of the twiceborn, these too he meted out (*nirmame*). The Brahmins’ *varṇa* was white, the Kṣatriyas’ was red, the Vaiśyas’ *varṇa* was yellow, and the Śūdras’ black.
>
> Bharadvāja said,
> If *varṇa* is distinguished by the *varṇa* of what applies to the four *varṇas*, then mixing of *varṇa* (*varṇasaṃkaraḥ*) is certainly seen among all the *varṇas*! Desire, anger, fear, greed, grief, anxiety, hunger, and toil prevail over us all. How can *varṇa* be distinguished? Sweat, urine, feces, phlegm, bile, and blood flow from all bodies. How can *varṇa* be distinguished? The kinds of birth (*jātis*) of mobile and immobile beings are innumerable. How can there be decisiveness on *varṇa* (*varṇaviniścayaḥ*) when these *varṇas* are so various?
>
> Bhṛgu said,
> There is no distinction of *varṇas*. This whole universe is *brahman*. It was created formerly by Brahmā, surely, and came to be classified by acts (*karmabhir varṇatāṃ gatam*). Twiceborns (*dvijas*) for whom desire and pleasures were dear, harsh, inclined to anger, given to boldness, and red-limbed, once they abandoned their *svadharma* they attained Kṣatriyahood. Twiceborns who had taken to cattle-rearing, yellowish, living off the plough, who did not follow their *svadharma*, they attained Vaiśyahood. Twiceborns who were fond of violence and lying, covetous, living off work of all kinds, darkish, fallen from purity, they attained Śūdrahood. Thus separated by these occupations (*ityetair karmabhir vyastā*), twiceborns attained difference of *varṇa*. *Dharma*, sacrifice, and rites are never prohibited for these—surely, these are the four *varṇas* about whom vedic speech is holy. Brahmins are established on the loom of *dharma* (*brāhmaṇā dharmatantrasthās*). Their austerity is not

> destroyed. Their vows and restraints are always engaged in upholding [root *dhṛ*] Brahmā. And those who do not know about what Brahmā formerly created, not knowing that, for these there are many other varied kinds of births (*jātis*) here and there. Piśācas, Rākṣasas, Pretas, and the various kinds of Mlecchas are motivated by unruly conduct (*svacchanda-ācara-ceṣṭitāḥ*), their knowledge and understanding destroyed. Offspring having the sacraments (*saṃskāras*) of Brahmins, resolved on doing their *svadharma*, were created by the Ṛṣis one after another by their own austerity. Primal, arisen from the god,[22] rooted in *brahman*, imperishable and unchanging—that creation is called mental, the ultimate recourse (or supreme end) of the loom of *dharma* (*dharmatantraparāyaṇā*). (*Mbh* 12.181)

The term *dharmatantra* appears several times in the *dharmasūtras*, and also at a few other points in the *Mahābhārata*. As in chapter 8, I take a little liberty by translating *tantra* here by its main meaning "loom." But I believe that it feels right for this double usage in a text that is not averse to bringing out the metaphoric power of practical and also sacrificial technologies when speaking of cosmic processes—most typically "churning," but also weaving, for which the term *tantra* makes other suggestive epic appearances, most notably in suggesting a comparison between the *Mahābhārata*'s own self-declared length of a hundred thousand couplets (1.56.13) and a lost prototype attributed to a group of ancient Ṛṣis known as the Citraśikhaṇḍins, who, "having become of a single thought, promulgated[23] a supreme treatise (*tair ekamatibhir bhūtvā yat proktaṃ śāstram uttamam*) . . . consisting of a hundred thousand verses, from which proceeds *dharma* for the entire loom of the worlds (*kṛtaṃ śatasahasraṃ hi ślokānām idam uttamam/ lokatantrasya kṛtsnasya yasmād dharmaḥ pravartate*)."[24]

In any case, Bharadvāja's questions make it clear what the passage is driving at and what Bhṛgu answers to with this metaphor. Toward the end of his queries Bharadvāja mentions *jātis* ("kinds of birth," including demons and

22. I believe Brahmā is implied, but not in a capital letter monotheistic sense.

23. For *proktam*, see Minkowski 1989, 402, 411–12 concerning *pra* + *vac/proktaḥ* as having Vedic overtones, with "the sense of an original utterance"; cf. Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 98–99.

24. *Mbh* 12.322.26d and 36. See Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 455–56). Other suggestive *Mahābhārata* usages are discussed in chapter 8 § D. See also 3.181.11c (plural); 5.29.19a and c. "Loom, fabric, or course of the Law" may also be pertinent in some *dharmasūtra* usages; see especially *G* 13.11 and 18.32, in which it is governed by the root *pīḍ*, "to harm" or "oppress," and *B* 1.10.8 with the similar *upa* + √*rudh*, "to thwart." Cf. Olivelle 1999, 327 with *dharmasūtra* citations and comment: "the exact meaning of the expression *dharmatantra* is unclear. . . . I think *tantra* here means something like 'the working' or 'the execution.'" *Manu* does not use the term.

of course "subcastes"), interchangeably with *varṇas*, but what he wants of Bhṛgu is to hear something decisive on *varṇa* (*varṇaviniścayaḥ*) that differentiates the four social classes from the plethora of *jātis*. Bhṛgu's decisiveness lies in making the four *varṇas* the cut-off line for *svadharma*. The only real, that is, original, *svadharma* is for once that of the Brahmins themselves. While they provide the archetype, the middle two classes originated from not following that original *svadharma*, and the same holds for Śūdras even though in their case *svadharma* is not even mentioned, only their fall from purity. As with the "full development" of Brahmin in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.3.11–14, the current *svadharmas* of these classes would, by implication, have to have been further "ordained" for them once they became distinguishable "by their acts," in what the eternal Veda has to say with regard to truth, *dharma*, austerity, and pure conduct. These practices are not prohibited for the lower three *varṇas*, but it is doubtful they pertain to the *jātis*—among whom "Piśācas, Rākṣasas, Pretas, and the various kinds of Mlecchas are motivated by unruly conduct." Heaven is open to all four *varṇas*, and, it would seem, to them alone. These four classes are, after all, mentioned in the *Puruṣa Sūkta*. Meanwhile, the other "innumerable" *jātis*, unclassified in the *Puruṣa Sūkta*, need not apply.

Such a cutoff on *svadharma* has further implications for other usages of *dharma* where we might think it applies, but where precious little if any guidance is offered as to what it might precisely be. *Āśramadharma* can also be *svadharma*, at least for the first three *āśramas*. But *āśramas*, at least in our classical *dharma* texts, are open only to the three upper *varṇas* and designed pretty much around males. As regards groups, we can quickly grasp that if *jātidharma* is not *svadharma*, then neither is *kuladharma* or the *dharma* of those who live in a region (*deśadharma*) or village (*grāmyadharma*). Nor is it possible to say that epic and Purāṇic gods and demons have *svadharma*. Most influential to the contrary has been O'Flaherty, who introduces "the particular duty [i.e., *svadharma*] of demons to be evil" as something that should be appreciated by "the gratified structuralist" (1976, 64; cf. 149), along with their capacity to violate this *svadharma* by being good (130). This is virtually a pure hypothetical, for I am aware of only one context that ties the notion of *svadharma* to any demons, and that occurs with reference to the legal category of Rākṣasa marriage. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāvaṇa tells Sītā that "making love to other men's wives and even carrying them off by force is the *svadharma* of Rākṣasas" (*Rām* 5.18.5). Similarly, the Rākṣasī Hiḍimbā tells Kuntī that she is abandoning her *svadharma* (i.e., foregoing abduction) to marry Bhīma (*Mbh* 1.143.7; see chapter 10 § C). Rākṣasa *svadharma* would seem to crop up as an ironic exception precisely for its overlap with Kṣatriya *svadharma*, since it can help to explain how even noble Kṣatriyas like Arjuna and Bhīṣma can engage in the Rākṣasa mode of marriage by

abduction—in their cases, of unmarried women. Otherwise, the notion that *svadharma* applies to demons—especially Asuras—being "evil" cannot be confirmed in the epics,[25] and it would seem to be hard to find even in the Purāṇas.[26] Yet O'Flaherty goes on to make further such extrapolations: that Death has a *svadharma* to kill (221, 229–31, 235); that Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Brahmā have *svadharmas* to create, destroy, etc. (225–26; cf. 1973, 139); and that "*svadharma* can be transcended by *bhakti*" (1976, 227; cf. 81–83, 131, 237, 377–78). On the first two points, the *Mahābhārata* passages in question again make no mention of such global divine *svadharmas*.[27] And the last point is bound up with an attempt to confine Max Weber's understanding of India's coordination of caste *dharma* with the law of karma—for Weber, "the most consistent theodicy ever produced" (1958, 121)—to an "orthodox period" (81) between earlier "ascetic" and later *bhakti* periods: something that is untenable in general, and more specifically so for the *Mahābhārata*[28] and the *BhG*. We must look beyond such gratifying syntheses—be they structuralist, historical, or ethical—to ask what it is that the texts actually say themselves about *svadharma*, when they begin to say it, what they say about it, and what they do not say about it.

Most interesting are the cases where the absence of *svadharma* has to do not only with classes but with individuals and their predicaments. As we saw in chapter 10 § C, Hiḍimbā's comment is one of only five instances where the epics mention *svadharma* in connection with women, for whom—as distinct

25. I have checked the *Mbh* passages O'Flaherty cites in support of this formulation and found that either they do not use the actual term *svadharma*., or use it but not in the sense ascribed, In *Mbh* 3.92.3–12, the Ṛṣi Lomaśa tells Yudhiṣṭhira that demons fall because they lapse into *adharma* (among other things by not performing rites), and not attributing this to any *svadharma* of theirs. 12.221.28 does have Śrī describe how the demons originally did their *svadharma*, but by being *good* in all the right ways rather than by being evil: they fell to bad ways (48) with their wives and children (59–61), began to mix castes (64), to enjoy sports that involved cross-dressing (67), and to allow daughters-in-law to lecture and rebuke their husbands in front of in-laws, the husband's parents (75), whereupon Śrī then came over to the Gods and Indra, along with eight other goddesses (81–82). Their deterioration, which would seem to have perfectly human models, does not result from any asuric *svadharma* to be evil.

26. I cannot check all of O'Flaherty's numerous Purāṇic references, in some of which her synthesis may apply. But where she refers to the *svadharma* of demons in *Vāmana Purāṇa* 11–16 (1976, 129–31), the passage's two sole usages of *svadharma* refer it only to the fourfold human social order and the *āśramas* suitable for specific *varṇas* (*VāmP* 15.64–66), and not to demons and other nonhuman beings, who have only *dharmas* (11.15–27), not *svadharmas*. Likewise, in this purāṇa's lengthy account of the rise and fall of the Asura Bali, although a demon may be said to have a wicked or cruel "nature" individually as his *svabhāva* (*VāmP* 59.26, 31), the only references to anyone's *svadharma* again pertain to those in the four *varṇas* (48.14; 49.13)—this, despite the fact that Deborah Soifer draws this passage into a discussion of Bali's alleged demonic *svadharma* that relies on O'Flaherty's categories and periodization (1991115–30). Soifer seems to hint at the difficulty where she mentions that the gods find Bali's rule untenable because he is "devoted to his asuric svadharma (which is adharma) or . . . more frequently devoted to *sanātana dharma*" (119). Soifer's translations supply numerous instances of Bali's problematic allegiance to *sanātanadharma*, but the only instance I see of *svadharma* again refers it to the humans over whom he rules (Soifer 1991, 243).

27. Hill 2001 has also worked from these premises to argue that demons' *svadharma* is *adharma* (104–14), and to speak of "Skanda's *svadharma*" (122) in a *Mbh* passage (3.207–21) that never mentions it. See also Leslie 1989, 265, comparing (otherwise astutely) the *dharmas* and *svabhāvas* of demons and women.

28. See my discussion in chapter 1 § B of O'Flaherty 1976's "heavy marination in historical periodization."

from *Manu*'s one usage—it seems to leave open some ironic spaces for negotiation. Indeed, Bhīṣma seems to treat *svadharma* ironically especially in the *Mokṣadharma* anthology. As in his presentation of Bhṛgu's discussion of *varṇa*, he gives the topic of women's *svadharma* a special ironic twist in the only case mentioned by him, that of Sulabhā, who overturns King Janaka's *varṇa*, *āśrama*, *gotra*, and gender fixations from the standpoint of her *nivṛtti* argument. But she still must make her argument in those terms. All the usages of women's *svadharma*, including that of Hiḍimbā, are voiced in the context of marital concerns that answer to categories of *varṇa*.

Meanwhile, although kings get the merits (*dharma*) of others' *svadharma* in various omnibus ways,[29] it is a real challenge, as Yudhiṣṭira's predicament constantly demonstrates, to figure out what that means when one is constantly reminded that his own real *svadharma* is his *kṣatriyadharma* to give, study, sacrifice, fight, and kill or be killed. Here is what Kṛṣṇa has to tell Yudhiṣṭhira on this score in the very first words of the visit he makes with Satyabhāmā to see the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī in the forest:

> *Dharma* is higher than obtaining a kingdom; they say austerity is its goal, king. While you did your *svadharma* (*caratā svadharmam*) uprightly and truly, you have won this world and the one beyond. At first you studied, practiced vows, having acquired the entire lore of the bow (*dhanurveda*); Having acquired wealth by *kṣātradharma*, surely all the ancient sacrifices were obtained. You did not find pleasure in village laws (*grāmyadharmeṣu*), Indra among men, pursue desires (*kāmān*), or abandon *dharma* out of greed for gain (*artha*). And thus by nature (*svabhāvād*) you *are* King Dharma. (3.180.16–18; see van Buitenen 1975, 571 for the last sentence)

More bellicose is what Kuntī says Kṛṣṇa should tell Yudhiṣṭhira about these matters when he returns to the Pāṇḍavas from his prewar "peace" embassy to the Kaurava court. Telling him to warn Yudhiṣṭhira, "Your *dharma* is greatly declined" (5.130.5c), she finds her son's intellect to be stricken by rote learning from seeking only one *dharma* (6cd); Kṣatriyas were created to protect subjects and a king gets a fourth of their *dharma* from doing so (11); a *daṇḍa*-wielding king is worthy of divinity and his *svadharma* should be the application of the

29. See *Mbh* 12.65–66 where Bhīṣma, trying to deter Yudhiṣṭhira from abandoning the householder *āśrama* for a renunciant one, says that *rājadharma* is itself a kind of omnibus *āśrama*—which curiously pertains to the confusion a king must address in a kingdom where the Ārya *varṇas* mix with varied Mlecchas (Greeks, Chinese, Śakas, etc.), and in which *dasyus* (robbers, local antisocial elements, including what the British called "Criminal Tribes") are "even following the four Life-Patterns, though under different outer manifestations (*liṅgāntare*)" (65.23). See Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 732–33 for a note on this terminology.

rod of force (*daṇḍanīti*) that regulates the four *varṇas* (13); such a king creates a Kṛtayuga, lesser kings middling *yugas*, and a wicked king goes to hell (14–19; see chapter 7 § A.3). She does not approve this son's noncruelty (*ānṛśaṃsya*), and neither she, Pāṇḍu, nor "Grandfather" (presumably Bhīṣma, since Vyāsa does endorse this virtue, as we saw in chapter 9) ever prayed that he be blessed by the wisdom he lives by (20–21)! Disappointed in having given birth to a son who leaves her on the dole living off the Kauravas (31), she concludes, "Fight by *rājadharma*, don't drown your grandfathers. Do not, with your merit (*puṇya*) exhausted, take an evil turn with your brothers" (32). The rationale for the king's *svadharma* seems quite convoluted. Perhaps this merit is the cumulative *dharma* he is neglecting in not overseeing others' *svadharma*, which should be his own *svadharma*, which is still nothing but his Kṣatriya *dharma*.

Fortunately or not, then, most guidance on a king's *svadharma* is couched as *kṣatriyadharma*. Yudhiṣṭhira is inundated with the latter, and contemplates its implications with some aversion as he speaks to Kṛṣṇa preparing for the virtual inevitability of war: "Kṣatriya kills Kṣatriya, fish lives on fish, dog kills dog—see *dharma* as it comes down (*paśya dharmo yathāgataḥ*!)" (5.70.48). Ganguli translates this misleadingly, implying that dogs and fish have *svadharma*: "Behold . . . how each of these followeth his peculiar virtue" (162). But these are proverbial references to what *kṣatriyadharma* is like as "custom" (*āgama*), not cases of animal *svadharma*, which is even harder to find than demon *svadharma* and the *svadharma* of women and kings. More attuned to such a dog eats dog world, and more receptive to Kṛṣṇa's guidance on Kṣatriya *svadharma*, is Yudhiṣṭhira's dashing younger brother Arjuna, who becomes especially receptive in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

C. *Manu* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*: Two Kinds of *Karmayoga*

The term *karmayoga* makes only one appearance in the *dharmasūtras*, where, in Olivelle's translation, it means "ritual use" when *Āpastamba* says, "The suspension of vedic recitation laid down in the vedic texts refers to vedic recitation and not the ritual use of vedic formulas (*na karmayoge mantrāṇām*)" (*Ā* 1.12.9).[30] Now, just as the *BhG* offers a distinctive presentation of *svadharma* as a concept found prominently in both *Manu* and the *Mahābhārata*, something similar may be said of *karmayoga*, but this second term has more restrictive usage in each text. In this case, while *Manu* and the *Gītā* each offer distinctive interpretations of *karmayoga*, elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata* the term seems barely adrift. It "occurs five times

30. Olivelle (1999, 22) cites *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 12.3.19 on this, suggesting it corresponds to a Mīmāṃsā usage.

in the *Gītā* (at 3.3 and 7, twice in 5.2, and at 13.24) and only four other times throughout the *MBh*" (Fitzgerald 2002, 650 n. 5), none of which gives the impression of being affected by its *BhG* usages or even of developing the term in any direction.[31] At *Mbh* 3.33.50, Draupadī tells Yudhiṣṭhira that "in the 'disciplines of action' (plural) valor is the principal force" (*bhūyiṣṭhaṃ karmayogeṣu sarva eva parākramaḥ*). As noted in chapter 10 § D, she seems in this speech to anticipate things that Kṛṣṇa will say in the *BhG*, but not in this case. The other three occurrences come in Bhīṣma's *Mokṣadharma* teachings in the *Śānti Parvan*. At 12.194.11, where Bhīṣma tells how Manu responded to Bṛhaspati's request to distinguish the fruits of knowledge from those of action (9), Manu says something like "'enjoinments to action' (plural) in(volving) Vedic chanting have the nature of desire" (*kāmātmakāśchandasi karmayogā*). As we will see, the quoted Manu sounds like the text *Manu* on the point about desire. The usage, if not the point, is also similar to *Āpastamba*'s mention, just cited, of "the 'ritual use' of vedic formulas." At 12.206.11, Bhīṣma himself, in a rant against women, describes how an intelligent person should disdain children as vermin because they are born "from a natural 'enjoinment to activity'" (*svabhāvātkarmayogād vā tānupekṣeta buddhimān*). Here, as in the *Gītā*, there is a connection between *karmayoga* and *svabhāva* ("natural" here), but Bhīṣma is hardly making the same point. And at 12.286.17, Bhīṣma quotes Parāśara on the topic of reincarnation to have said, "Caused by 'union with acts,' one is born here and there" (*bhāvitaṃ karmayogena jāyate tatra tatra ha*). Recall too that the sole usage in the *Rāmāyaṇa* describes Hanumān as "settling into his own plan of action" (*svakarmayoga ca vidhāya*; 5.40.30). The originality of the *Gītā* stands out against this background, and calls for restraint, as I pointed out in chapter 9,[32] when it comes to reading the *Gītā*'s *karmayoga* teaching into the rest of the text. More so even than *svadharma*, it has special import to Arjuna in coming just before the *Mahābhārata* war. Meanwhile, *Manu*'s formulations on *karmayoga* are concentrated in its final and most "philosophical" chapter 12 on the fruits of action and the process of reincarnation.

To read translations of these texts, one would never gather that they are rendering the same term. Although *Manu* has a distinctive take on *karmayoga*,

31. See, however, Fitzgerald 2002, 641, 647, who positions the *karmayoga* doctrine to be developing toward its "late" and apparently "Gupta" articulation in the *Gītā*.

32. See chapter 9 § E.2.b on Arjuna's "free pass" through the war from having heard the *Gītā*. Dhand 2004 provides a questionable extension in her discussion of the Śūdra woman's easy manner in having a substitute sexual union with the *Mahābhārata*'s smelly ascetic author Vyāsa (see chapter 8 § D), and even more implausibly makes such a case for Rāma in his banishment of Sītā (2002). Similarly, I am not persuaded by Brodbeck that the impulse of epic males to derail their marriages is a "gendered soteriology" that allows "continued performance of social *dharmas* in a spirit of *karmayoga*" (2007*a*, 145, 159, 164), citing in the same vein Dhand 2007—both extending the principle by analogy to other figures. See likewise Brodbeck 2009*c*, 47–49, generalizing it to a warrior ideology, *lokasaṃgraha*, and the *deva-asura* conflict. Whatever one may read into them, the epics do not make these moves.

it almost seems that *Manu*'s translators have rendered it in ways that would avoid suspicion that they were contaminating *Manu* by a *Gītā* reading. But clearly it is the same term, and I think the two texts' usages probably have some kind of relation to each other in the pivotal ways they each position the concept. In both texts one can easily tie in the usages of *karmayoga* with those of *svadharma* and *svakarma* as they relate to theories of ritual and ideologies of sacrifice; but the theory and ideology differ in each text. In each case *karmayoga* is clustered with a different range of concepts.

In *Manu*'s very first usage of *karmayoga*, the motivation for action entails desire in a way that is difficult to square with the *Gītā*'s ideal of desireless action:[33]

> To be motivated by desire is not commended, but it is impossible here to be free from desire (*akāmatā*); for it is desire that prompts vedic study and the performance of vedic rites (*karmayogaś ca vaidikaḥ*). Intention (*saṃkalpa*) is the root of desire; intention is the wellspring of sacrifice and intention triggers every religious observance and every rule of restraint—so the tradition declares. Nowhere in this world do we see any activity done by a man free from desire (*akāmasya*), for whatever at all that a man may do, it is the work of someone who desired it. By engaging in them properly, a man obtains the world of the immortals and, in this world, obtains all his desires just as he intended. (2.2–5; Olivelle trans. 94, dubbing this an "excursus")

Christopher Framarin (2006) argues that *Manu*'s views in these verses are closer to the *Gītā*'s than has been thought, but subsequently acknowledges that there are also significant differences (Framarin 2009, 88–91, 93). In brief, "Unlike the *Manusmṛti*, however, the *Gītā* does not limit the advice to act without desire to a narrow class of ritual actions. The *Gītā*'s advice to act without desire for ends extends to all actions" (93). Framarin's argument that *Manu* calls for action without desire relies on a reading of *saṃkalpa*, in the second verse above, by the eighth- or ninth-century commentator Medhātithi. It would seem that Medhātithi seeks to square *Manu* 2.2–5 with the *Gītā*'s desireless action by interpreting *saṃkalpa* "not [as] an intention, but a belief or cognition" (Framarin 2006, 402; 2009, 79), and taking *Manu* to refer to *nityakarmas* ("ritual actions

33. The *BhG* associates *karmayoga* with "unattached (*asakta*) action or *karma*" (3.19) that is "devoid of the intention (*saṃkalpa*)" to achieve a ritually defined desire (4.19), and, moreover, "renouncing without exception all objects of desire that are rooted in intentions (*saṃkalpaprabhavān kāmāṃs tyaktvā sarvān*)" (6.24). This is elsewhere called *niṣkāma-karma* or "action without the desire for its fruits." As Bagchee (in press) points out, the *BhG* itself does not use this term, which seems to have been coined for it by commentators—although we will see it at *Manu* 12.90.

for which no result is mentioned in the Vedas"), in which "the desire that is prohibited is the desire for the fruit," as opposed to *kāmyakarmas* ("ritual actions performed for the sake of some *phala*") (Framarin 2006, 404–5; 2009, 83–84 for the definitions). Framarin then interprets *saṃkalpa* here as a "belief" that motivates desire "for the means to one's end, since it is the result of a means-end belief," the means being "the most important thing" (2006, 403, 405). Medhātithi's interpretation puts *Manu* in the position of "prohibiting" certain desires, which *Manu* does not do, and "the most important thing" would, I think, still be a "desire for *dharma*" (*dharmakāma*) as a means. Note that Framarin follows up this comparison of the *BhG* and *Manu* with a "reconsideration" of *Yogasūtra* 1.25, where, "if Īśvara has a desire at all—and remember, the *Yogasūtra* does not say this—it must be a desire for the means of teaching knowledge and *dharma*" (Framarin 2009, 92, referencing 38–39). The phrase *dharmakāma* is not found in *Manu*, but is common enough in the *Mahābhārata*, where, for instance, Draupadī blames the Pāṇḍavas' troubles on Yudhiṣṭhira's "desire for *dharma*" at 3.34.8, and Mārkaṇḍeya prophesies that Brahmins will be "desirous of *dharma*" after Kalki has brought back the Kṛta *yuga* (3.189.11). In terms of telling us what *Manu* actually says, Brodbeck finds Framarin's "recourse here to Medhātithi . . . unconvincing" (2009*b*, 137), as I do, whereas Bagchee (in press) appreciates Framarin's vigorous articulation across texts of a recurrent Indian epistemology of desireless action. Since I am not concerned with the literal viability of desireless action in the *Gītā*, which is Framarin's main concern in critiquing "non-literal" readings of it by Brodbeck and others,[34] the matter of whether *Manu* might be consonant with it is not pressing to this discussion. Brodbeck concedes that Framarin "convincingly defends the notion of literally desireless action against clear and present lines of attack" (2009*b*, 137).

Now as Brodbeck observes, in *Manu* 2.2–5, "performance of vedic rites," or, as he translates it, "'engagement in Vedic action,' may also be translated . . . 'Vedic *karmayoga*'" (2004, 85).[35] As noted, *Manu* compounds *karmayoga* primarily with ritual rules (and thus implicitly with both *svadharma* and *svakarma*), but never relates these concepts to any usage of *svabhāva*, which it keeps to two topics: the "natural range" of the black buck (2.23), and the "very nature" of women, which is "to corrupt men."[36] *Manu*'s other uses of *karmayoga* are enough to indicate that

34. See Framarin 2009, 8–14, critiquing Brodbeck 2004, which will be discussed.

35. Brodbeck 2004 marks the contrast with the *BhG* but without, in that article, addressing the *Gītā*'s usages of *karmayoga* directly.

36. See *M* 2.213 (Olivelle 2005*a*, 105). See also *M* 9.15–20, beginning, "Lechery, fickleness of mind, and hardheartedness are innate (*svabhāvataḥ*) in them; recognizing thus the nature (*svabhāvam*) produced in them at creation by Prajāpati, a man should make the utmost effort at guarding them." These usages of *svabhāva* parallel that of *svālakṣaṇya* to similarly describe women's "true character" as promiscuous at the end of this passage.

they are not late afterthoughts to the text, and Olivelle includes only the first usage among what he calls "excurses." At 2.68 Olivelle translates the term *karmayoga* as "the activities connected with" the *upanayana* or sacred thread ceremony, and this is in a transitional verse with what he regards as *Manu*'s signature transition-marker, *nibodhata*, "Listen"; at 6.86, in another transitional verse with *nibodhata*, Olivelle translates *karmayoga* as "ritual discipline" in "the ritual discipline of vedic retirees" (*vedasaṃnyāsins*); at 10.115, among the seven means of acquiring wealth, it surely means more than just "work";[37] and at 12.2, in something like the transitional verses, there is a return to the frame where the great Ṛṣis are told, "Listen to the determination with respect to the engagement in action (*karmayoga*)." Finally, in chapter 12, where *Manu* unfolds "Vedic *karmayoga*" most fully, he does so in relation to ideas of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* (important also in the *BhG* as well as in the *Nārāyaṇīya*) that bear especially on reincarnation and *mokṣa*:

> One should understand that acts prescribed by the Veda (*karma vaidakam*) are always a more effective means of securing the highest good both here and in the hereafter than the above six activities.[38] All these activities without exception are included within the scheme of the acts prescribed by the Veda (*vaidike karmayoge*), each in the proper order within the rules of a corresponding act (*kriyāvidhau*). Acts prescribed by the Veda are of two kinds: advancing (*pravṛttam*), which procures the enhancement of happiness; and arresting (*nivṛttam*), which procures the supreme good. An action performed to obtain a desire here or in the hereafter is called an "advancing act" (*pravṛttam karma*), whereas an action performed without desire (*niṣkāmam*) and prompted by knowledge is said to be an "arresting act" (*nivṛttam*). By engaging in advancing acts, a man attains equality with the gods; by engaging in arresting acts, on the other hand, he transcends the five elements. (*M* 12.86–90; Olivelle trans. 2005*a*, 234)

Again, "the scheme of the acts prescribed by the Veda (*vaidike karmayoge*)" could be translated "Vedic *karmayoga*." It is not clear how one is to reconcile *Manu*'s earlier statements that no action was ever done "without desire" (*akāma*) with this allowance for *nivṛtta* actions to be *niṣkāma*. In context, it appears to be an allowance for what the *Nārāyaṇīya* calls *nivṛtti-dharma* (or what the *BhG* calls *jñānayoga*), differentiating it from "Vedic *karmayoga*" rather

37. Olivelle's translation; Doniger (1991) offers "working," and Bühler [1886] 1969 "the performance of work."

38. *M* 12.83: the six are Vedic recitation, *tapas*, knowledge, controlling the senses, noninjury, and service of the teacher.

than correlating the two.[39] But one thing is definite: *Manu* does not subordinate "Vedic *karmayoga*" to *bhaktiyoga* or to any ideas about "inherent natures" that underlie dharmic actions.

In the *Gītā*, as is well known,[40] *karmayoga* is taught by a Kṣatriya incarnation of God, himself the ultimate *karmayogin*, to a Kṣatriya prince. Once Kṛṣṇa has introduced the term at *BhG* 3.2–7, he relates it to sacrifice in its "cosmogonic function as being an integral part of creation," leading up to his indication of how he himself acts in the three worlds with nothing to accomplish (3.9–24). Then, after Kṛṣṇa mentions it again as "higher than the renunciation of acts" (*karmasaṃnyāsād*) (5.2), he teaches in chapters 5 and 6 "why *karmayoga* is possible" as "one of the most important features of the cosmic cause of all activity," leading up the invitation to give up one's attachment to action by offering it up to Kṛṣṇa "as the only agent and lord."[41] By this point, *karmayoga* is arrayed with the two other *yogas* or "disciplines" of *jñānayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*. Like Īśvara in the *Yogasūtra*, Kṛṣṇa *may* have no desire except to teach *dharma*, as Framarin makes plausible, pointing out that *BhG* 3.25 is "one of the only passages in the *Gītā* in which Kṛṣṇa seems to endorse desire. The passage reads: 'As the ignorant act attached in action, O Arjuna, so the wise should act without attachment, desiring (*cikīrṣur*) *lokasaṃgraha*'" (2009, 90, citing Sadhale trans. 1985, 25–26)—that is, "the holding together of the world." As Bagchee (in press) comments on Framarin's discussion of this desiderative usage of √*kṛ*, "to do," "The wise person's desire is not a desire for a specific end (which would dispose him to joy or disappointment depending upon the outcome): it is a '*desir[e] to do.*'"[42] Indeed, at 7.11cd, Kṛṣṇa says, "I am the desire in beings that does not run counter to *dharma* (*dharmāviruddho bhuteṣu kāmo 'smi bharatarṣabha*)" (cf. van Buitenen 1981, 99). In any case, Kṛṣṇa explains *svadharma* and *svakarma* against this background, but compounded by the additional concept of *svabhāva*, "inherent nature." That is, according to Kṛṣṇa, doing one's duty and occupations properly springs ultimately from one's "intrinsic," "innate," or "inherent nature." Of all the places in the *Mahābhārata* that present extensive discussions relating *svadharma* and *svakarma*,[43] the *Gītā* presents the

39. As Brodbeck 2009*b*, 138 points out in questioning Framarin's view that *Manu* 2.2–4 teaches desireless action in a way consonant with the *BhG*, "*Manusmṛti* 12.88–90, which Framarin does not mention, presents a more compatible view."

40. See van Buitenen 1981, 12, 18–20; Brodbeck 2004; Hill 2001, 331–34, 342, 351; Woods 2001, 71–76, 143, 172, 182; Sutton 2000, 65, 126, 137, 330.

41. I paraphrase and quote from Malinar 2007*a*, 81–82, 128–29, 155.

42. See *BhG* 18.30, describing the sattvic temperament that can discriminate *pravṛtti* from *nivṛtti*, what is to be done (*kārya*) from what is not to be done (*akārya*), and bondage from *mokṣa*.

43. This occurs for instance in Hanumān's encounter with Bhīma (3.148.17; 149.25–50); in the "Colloquy of the Brahmin and the Hunter" (3.198.25–38; 199.14–15, 34); and in the "Instruction of Śuka" (12.309.46–90; cf. 2.50.6–7; 12.67.30–31; 12.107.14–16; 12.110.29–24l).

only case where these terms are compounded by this additional "inherent" grounding, which is ultimately a grounding in Kṛṣṇa's lower nature or *prakṛti*.

Now as Brodbeck points out, if we are to understand the *Gītā* as having any impact on Arjuna, "the notion of *svabhāva* used here must logically be specific to individual people rather than to individual *varṇas*. We would even want to go further and describe *svabhāva* as variable within one lifetime" (2004, 90); it must be "a continuously varying quality" (99) if it is to have any bearing on the change Arjuna undergoes from the *Gīta*'s beginning to its end. Moreover, this manner of acting that Kṛṣṇa teaches Arjuna is presented as having "universal applicability" that extends rhetorically to "the text's audience" (81–82). Although Brodbeck now seems to be persuaded by Framarin that it can be taken literally, he argues—I think plausibly enough in context—that "the availability of non-attachment in action functions as a narrative fiction to explain, on the conventional level, how Arjuna can satisfactorily be persuaded to fight"; "the universal applicability of Kṛṣṇa's technique is a conceit of the way in which the text reports Arjuna's changing his mind" (2004, 100). There is in fact nothing to directly indicate how or whether Arjuna actually understood or benefitted from Kṛṣṇa's *karmayoga* teaching, and some later evidence that it did not stick: Arjuna tells Kṛṣṇa that what he said in the *BhG* is "lost" (*naṣṭa*m) to him and that he is curious to hear it again (*Mbh* 14.16.6–7)! To which Kṛṣṇa, not at all pleased (10), replies with the *Anugītā* in Book 14, never getting back to the term *karmayoga*, which we could say—the *Mahābhārata* war now being over—is lost for good. My sense of Kṛṣṇa's teaching of *karmayoga* in the *BhG* is that it is something like Gutei's (Chü Chih's) "one finger Zen." Whenever Gutei was asked a question,

> all he did was raise one finger. Once a disciple of his was asked by
> a visitor: What is the main point of the Law your master teaches?
> So the disciple raised his finger. . . . (Beyer 1974, 263)

For Gutei himself, like Kṛṣṇa, it may have been "more than I could use up in an entire life time," and it brought some sudden enlightenment to the "little disciple" when he got his finger cut off. But it was not something that Gutei or anyone else could ever teach in the same way again.

Moreover, we may note that when Kṛṣṇa first speaks to Arjuna about *karmayoga* at *BhG* 3.3, it is in answer to a question of Arjuna's that he answers, if at all, only by deflection or perhaps a long delay: "If more important than action The mental attitude is held of Thee, Janārdana, Then why to violent action (*karmaṇi ghore*) Dost Thou enjoin me, Keśava?" (*BhG* 3.1; Edgerton trans. 1952 33). As Brodbeck says, "There is no getting around it: the extent of Kṛṣṇa's 'rational assessment of the situation', at least as far as ethics is concerned,

is that Arjuna is a kṣatriya and so must—and will—fight" (2004, 98). That is, Kṛṣṇa's teaching of *karmayoga* is tailor-made for the consummate warrior Kṣatriya, and not for the king (or at least not for Yudhiṣṭhira).

One of the questions driving this chapter so far is by now no doubt clear enough. Out of the nexus of Kṛṣṇa's teachings, many wondrous things contribute to making Arjuna lose track of his lingering question, "Then why to violent action?" One of these is the idea, on which the *Mahābhārata* and *Manu* 7.87 agree, that warriors who die in battle go to heaven, which Kṛṣṇa has already delivered as part of his shock treatment (*BhG* 2.33–37) before he gets to any yogas or "disciplines." *Manu* also declares that one should never kill an animal out of desire, that "killing in sacrifice is not killing," that when plants and animals die in sacrifice they earn superior births, and that "when killing is sanctioned by the Veda it should definitely be regarded as non-killing" (5.37–44)—all of which Brian K. Smith assigns to the "fog machine" (Doniger and Smith 1991, xlii). In February 2006, I read a dissertation proposal on the "inner jihad,"[44] and remarked to its author, Waleed El-Ansary, that it sounded like *karmayoga*, by which of course I meant the *BhG*'s *karmayoga*, with which he was prepared to agree. Like "inner jihad," Arjuna's inner struggle is one thing, and deserves respect, even if he seems to be forgetful; but arguments to kill others because God says so are something else, and, as I went on to say, an agony of our times, and obviously not of our times alone. Of the cluster of ideas that Kṛṣṇa assembles in the *BhG* to get Arjuna to fight, it is not *svadharma* alone that must be singled out. Kṛṣṇa's teaching to kill with indifference runs the risk of winning the warrior who has not quite mastered it the same prize—heaven being just a favorable rebirth—as the sacrificial goat.

D. Where Kṛṣṇa Is There Is *Dharma*

We have now begun to notice that the *BhG* has ripples in the wider *Mahābhārata* text. Would that this could bring pause to the long debate over whether the *BhG* is an interpolation entirely, or is one all but for a few old verses near its beginning (possibly its middle) and its end that belong to some kind of original tribal war narrative—in either case with the shared premise that what is interpolated would itself be a patchwork of layered inserts. Among those who have enlivened this debate, there is no serious consideration that the *BhG* could be an integral unit of a larger whole, and no questioning whether the tools of the so-called "higher criticism" have been fruitfully applied in the *Gītā*'s case. Suffice it to say that the few cumulative results of this approach have been based on unsound

44. See now El-Ansary 2006, 209–69 for a hermeneutic also of the "outer *jihād*."

assumptions.[45] Yet some scholars taking this stratifying approach have recognized that the *BhG* does resonate with other units, passages, and themes in the *Mahābhārata*. They have thus added to cumulative results on this front—though with the difference that, for them, such correspondences show either layers of interpolation that coincide with those in the *BhG*, or the *BhG*'s influence on the larger text, which would make these other units, passages, or themes later even than the *Gītā* (or of the corresponding layers in the *Gītā*).[46] As one of those who views the *BhG* as an integral unit of the larger epic as conceived, I take the opposite view on this more central matter that still eludes real debate. But the important point for now is to register that resonances with the *BhG* are not limited to ones that foreshadow or build up to the beginning of the war narrative, such as Arjuna's charioteering for the fainthearted Matsya prince in their duel with the Kauravas that ends the Pāṇḍavas' thirteenth year of exile in disguise "as a precursor and, in a way, a parody" of the *Gītā* and of Kṛṣṇa's charioteering for Arjuna (Goldman 1995, 94), or in exchanges during the prewar *Udogaparvan*.[47] They also include philosophical points made in debates with Yudhiṣṭhira by Arjuna and Vyāsa after the war is over,[48] and even by Draupadī in the forest well before the war has begun, as we saw in chapter 10 § D. Of course this is not to say that these dialogical interludes are not part of the war narrative. They are. But why should not a war narrative be interrupted by philosophical, ethical, and theological exchanges in the *Mahābhārata*? Or indeed, further supplemented by such exchanges in the *Nārāyaṇīya* or the *Anugītā*?

These questions position us to begin our discussion, announced at the beginning of this chapter, of how the *BhG* presents *dharma* through a ring structure. From ripples to rings is of course (for a stone's throw) just a movement

45. See Adluri and Bagchee forthcoming for a discussion of German *BhG* scholarship, all of which (except Joseph Dahlmann) has proceeded from the shared assumption that a war narrative would not be interrupted by a philosophical discussion! See Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*a* and chapter 1 § B on the "tribal" premise backing this extraordinary assumption.

46. See Grünendahl 1997; Malinar 1997, both on correspondence between the *BhG* and the *Nārāyaṇīya*, deemed on the whole later than the *BhG*, with Grünendahl arguing that such correspondences derive from a very late coating that would include a unit called the *Viśvopākhyāna*, discussed above in the text; cf. chapter 6 n. 42.

47. This is the starting point for Malinar's discussion of the background of the *Gītā* in debates over war and peace (2007*a*, 35–53). Cf. Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 14–40 on *Udyogaparvan-BhG* continuities in the two theophanies there of Kṛṣṇa.

48. See Hiltebeitel 2005*d*, 251–58, "The *Bhagavad Gītā* and the Cheering Up of Yudhiṣṭhira," especially 256 on *Mbh* 12.32.11–24. After the war, Vyāsa speaks implicitly to the pertinence of the *Gītā*'s teachings to Yudhiṣṭhira, offering four perspectives on what accounts for action: the Lord, man, chance, and *karma*, saying this about the first: "When men who have been commanded by the Lord (*īśvareṇa niyuktāḥ*) do a good or bad deed, the consequences of that deed go to the Lord. For obviously if a man were to chop down a tree in the forest with an axe, the evil would belong to the man doing the chopping and not at all to the axe" (Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 241–42). As in *BhG* 11.33d, a king using the *daṇḍa*, like Arjuna taking up his weapons, would, like the axe, be the "mere instrument" (*nimittamātram*) of the Lord. Vyāsa concludes that from this standpoint, "It would not be right that one should acquire consequences effected by another. Therefore assign it to the Lord (*tasmāc ca īśvare tan niveśaya*)" (cf. *BhG* 12.6–8).

inward. In this section, I still discuss ripples outward from the *BhG*, beginning from *adhyāyas* on the edges of the *BhG* proper (*Mbh* 6.23–40) in the "*Bhagavad Gītā* Sub-book" or *upaparvan* called the *Bhagavadgītāparvan* (*Mbh* 6.14–41). There, on both sides of the eighteen-*adhyāya BhG*, we find a formulaic verse relating Kṛṣṇa and *dharma* that ripples out into the wider text. After tracing how this theme ripples out from the *BhG* proper into the wider *Mahābhārata*, in the final section of this chapter I will zero in on rings of *dharma* in the *BhG* itself.

We thus turn to a well-known set of signature *Mahābhārata* formulae. Setting them initially in boldface, let us begin with usages of these formulae closest to the *BhG* proper that occur in verses within the *Bhagavadgītāparvan*. We will then look into their recurrence, contextualizations, and wider reverberations. On the near side of the *Gītā*, we have Arjuna tell Yudhiṣṭhira:

> *tyaktvādharmaṃ ca lobhaṃ ca mohaṃ codyamam āsthitāḥ/*
> Abandon *adharma*, greed, and delusion, be enterprising,
> *yudhyadhvam anahaṃkārā* ***yato dharmas tato jayaḥ****//*
> and then fight without thought of ego. Where *dharma* is there is victory.
> *evaṃ rājan vijānīhi dhruvo 'smākaṃ raṇe jayaḥ/*
> So know, king, that our victory in battle is assured,
> *yathā me nāradaḥ prāha* ***yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ****//*
> for as Nārada has told me, "Where Kṛṣṇa there is victory."
>
> *anantatejā govindaḥ śatrupūgeṣu nirvyathaḥ/*
> Govinda of infinite splendor strides unconcernedly among the multitude of his enemies,
> *puruṣaḥ sanātanatamo* ***yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ****//*
> the most everlasting Puruṣa. Where Kṛṣṇa is there is victory. (6.21.11–12, 14)

And on the *Gītā*'s far side, Droṇa tells Yudhiṣṭhira:

> ***yato dharmas tataḥ kṛṣṇo yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ****/*
> Where *dharma* is there is Kṛṣṇa, where Kṛṣṇa is there is victory.
> *yudhyasva gaccha kaunteya pṛccha māṃ kim bravīmi te//*
> Go and fight, Kaunteya. What can I tell you? Ask me. (6.41.55)[49]

Within these verses, we find second half-lines (*pādas*) telling us, "Where *dharma* is, there is victory" (6.20.11d), or "Where Kṛṣṇa is, there is victory" (6.20.12d; 6.20.14d; 6.41.55b). Preceding the last of these *pādas*, we also find an initial

49. See van Buitenen 1981, 64–65 and 150–51 for the text and his translation, which I largely follow here, of these first two in-close citations. One of the attractions of his translation of the full *Bhagavadgītāparvan* is that it showcases this initial framing.

first *pāda* telling us, "Where *dharma* is, there is Kṛṣṇa" (6.41.55a), giving us a complete combining of these two formulas. This line's indication that *dharma* and Kṛṣṇa go together also occurs in reverse form in an initial *pāda* followed by the other of our two closing *pādas*. Indeed, soon after the *Bhagavadgītāparvan*, we hear Bhīṣma tell Duryodhana:

> *rājan sattvamayo hyeṣa tamorāgavivarjitaḥ/*
> O king, made of goodness, this one is divested of darkness and passion.
> ***yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato dharmo yato dharmas tato jaya//***
> Where Kṛṣṇa is there is dharma, where dharma is there is victory.(6.62.34)

Let us break these formulas down and contextualize their usages.

The first thing to note is that Kṛṣṇa and *dharma* go together: either by the phrase "Where *dharma* is there is Kṛṣṇa (*yato dharmas tataḥ kṛṣṇo*)" (6.41.55a, just after the *Gītā* proper; 9.61.30c), or its reverse, "Where Kṛṣṇa is there is *dharma* (*yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato dharmo*)" (6.62.34c; 13.153.39c).[50] In either case, all these statements occur at the beginning of a line or hemistich in which they serve as the major premise to a subordinate but emphatically punctuated sequel *pāda* in which the second term mentioned in the initial *pāda* becomes the first in the second. Thus in the first two cases, where Kṛṣṇa is mentioned after *dharma*, it is "Where Kṛṣṇa is there is victory (*yataḥ/yathā kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ*)" (6.41.55b; see also 9.61.30d); and in the second pair where *dharma* is mentioned after Kṛṣṇa, we find "Where *dharma* is there is victory (*yato dharmas tato jayaḥ*)" (6.62.34d; see also 13.153.39d). Of these two subordinate claims, the first—"Where Kṛṣṇa is there is victory"—occurs four times independently (1.197.25d; 5.66.9d; 6.21.12d and 14d); and the second—"Where *dharma* is there is victory"—occurs eleven times independently (5.39.7d; 5.141.33d, 5.146.16d, 6.2.14d, 6.21.11d, 6.61.16d, 6.117.33d, 7.158.62b, 9.62.58d, 11.13.9d, 11.17.6d), with all fifteen of these more curtailed usages kept to second *pādas* where they follow from other initial premises or lead-ins. There is obviously a circularity between the three terms *dharma*, Kṛṣṇa, and victory (*jaya*), but with only the latter mentioned in all these citations, and solely in concluding *pādas*. My shorthand for such usages will be "the *yatas tatas* formula."

These phrases are well known since they were discussed in a 1918–20 article by Sylvain Lévi, but not much seems to have been said about them since.[51] Lévi's article is about *jaya*, "victory," and has the merit of demonstrating

50. Brockington 1998, 146–47 sees the first two usages set in late units, but allows as to "the account of the actual death of Bhīṣma" that it "may well belong to an appreciably earlier stage of the epic's growth" (152) than the later portions of Books 12 and 13.

51. See Matilal 2002, 99, noting that the differentiated phrases imply that "Kṛṣṇa bears the entire responsibility" for the tenuous link between *dharma* and the outcome of victory, but without the "story-teller" making him omnipotent.

that these tags tie in with a fan of other formulaic and quasi-formulaic usages: that *jaya* is mentioned along with Nārāyaṇa and Nara in the benedictory verse that prefaces each book of the *Mahābhārata*; that Nārāyaṇa and Nara (as one is also intermittently reminded) are ancient identities of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna as former Ṛṣis; that *Jaya* is a name for the *Mahābhārata* itself (13–15); and, as Lévi could have added, that Jaya and Vijaya, both meaning "victory," are names for Arjuna, so that all the lines that mention *jaya* can suggest Arjuna's companionship with Kṛṣṇa and his fidelity to Kṣatriyadharma. But I believe that Lévi's emphasis on *jaya* also led him to misinterpret the *pādas* that relate Kṛṣṇa and *dharma*. According to Lévi, the maxim "Where Kṛṣṇa is there is *dharma*"

> seems to proclaim a lesson of transcendent morality. Right gives the victory. But it would be reading the *Mahābhārata* false. . . . It is, like all the creations of the Hindu genius, a work of a caste and a sect . . .; it preaches to the kṣatriyas the cult of Kṛṣṇa as a guarantee of success and welfare. For the kṣatriya success means victory, *jaya*; and the safety (and salvation) of the kṣatriya is none else but Kṛṣṇa the God of the kṣatriyas . . . ; where there is Kṛṣṇa there is law (*dharma*), the law proper to the kṣatriya. . . . The *Mahābhārata* in its entirety is the amplification of these principles, which come to a focus and stand out very clearly in the *Bhagavadgītā*. This incomparable dialogue, often considered a sublime hors d'oeuvre, is quite, on the contrary, the very heart and kernel of the work. (Lévi 1918–20, 15–16)

I believe Lévi is right to speak of the *BhG*'s centrality in relation to Kṣatriyadharma, but I would demur on the *Mahābhārata*'s deriving from some kind of Kṣatriya "sect," and on its being an amplification of Kṣatriya principles (it is a palate of Brahmanical principles *for* Kṣatriyas). Lévi is following a fashion that took *Jaya* to imply an original *Mahābhārata*. In any case, one needs to be clearer that this centrality is one of design. These lines about Kṛṣṇa, *dharma*, and victory must be read in their epic contexts rather than abstracted into principles. The first thing we have noticed is that a significant cluster of these citations (6.21.11–12 and 14, 6.41.55) occur in segments of the *Bhagavadgītāparvan* that frame the *BhG*. Indeed, two of the only four instances that mention Kṛṣṇa *along with dharma* occur right after the *Gītā*'s *dharma* revelations. The *Gītā*'s ring structure of *dharma* thus has rings of *dharma* around it. Equally interesting: all but one[52] of these passages are addressed to one or another of the epic's three most

52. I leave aside this one passage: Karṇa's prophetic dream, described to Kṛṣṇa in their secret meeting in Book 5, which is about Yudhiṣṭhira but does not reach his ears. Having dreamed of Yudhiṣṭhira victorious on a mountain of bones and Bhīma and Arjuna in stances of victory, Karṇa says, "I know, Hṛṣīkeśa, where *dharma* is there is victory" (5.141.33cd).

implicated kings: Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Duryodhana, and Yudhiṣṭhira. They are not addressed to Arjuna-Jaya, although one of them is addressed *by him* to Yudhiṣṭhira. Given these considerations, we can expect to find that in building up to the *BhG* and the threshold of the *Mahābhārata* war, these tags would be telling these kings things about Kṛṣṇa's relation to *dharma* and victory that differ from what Kṛṣṇa has to say about these matters to Arjuna. Let us look first at what Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Duryodhana hear, and then what Yudhiṣṭhira hears.

Of all these figures, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is by far the very first to catch wind of a *yatas tatas* formula when, in Book 1, his half-brother Vidura—who incarnates the god Dharma—tells him, soon after the Pāṇḍavas have married Draupadī and emerged from hiding as Brahmins, that the Kauravas should give them half the kingdom. Vidura speaks as if good relations with the Pāṇḍavas will make their allies also allies of the Kauravas, and says to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, "The Dāśārhas [Kṛṣṇa's people] are mighty and numerous, king; where Kṛṣṇa is there they would be; where Kṛṣṇa is there is victory (*yataḥ kṛṣṇas tatas te syur yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ*)" (1.197.25). As noted, none of these passages before the *Gītā* mentions Kṛṣṇa's connection with *dharma*, but the intelligent reader (if not yet Dhṛtarāṣṭra) can piece that in as background, since shortly before this Kṛṣṇa's very first word in the epic is "*dharma*." As we noted in chapter 10 § B, he utters it after he has recognized Arjuna in his Brahmin guise and endorses the outcome of Draupadī's *svayaṃvara*.

We next find Dhṛtarāṣṭra, during a sleepless vigil as the war looms, telling Vidura that despite all his good advice, "I cannot abandon my son—where *dharma* is there is victory (*yato dharmas tato jayaḥ*)" (5.39.7cd). In this first prewar usage of this phrase by one of the Kauravas, the curtailed adage may suggest the wistful hope that *dharma* and victory together might suffice without Kṛṣṇa even though, if Dhṛtarāṣṭra remembers what Vidura told him in Book 1, he would at least know that Kṛṣṇa and victory go together.[53] Then, just after Vyāsa has given Saṃjaya the divine eye by which he will be able to narrate the war, beginning with the *BhG*, Vyāsa utters the same shorthand formula, narrowing any room for Dhṛtarāṣṭra to take it as a seed of hope: "O Bharata bull, I will spread the fame of all these Kurus and Pāṇḍavas. Do not grieve. This is formerly fated (*diṣṭam etat purā*), and you are not to grieve about it. It cannot be checked. Where *dharma* is there is victory (*yato dharmas tato jayaḥ*)" (6.2.13–14).

Once the fighting is underway, Dhṛtarāṣṭra next hears about such matters when he asks Saṃjaya why the fifth day of battle has gone badly for his sons. Here, in a highly devotional unit known as the *Viśvopākhyāna*, Saṃjaya replies that the Pāṇḍavas' success owes nothing to magic (*māyā*), incantations (*mantras*),

53. At 5.66.9d, Saṃjaya tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Vyāsa, and Gāndhārī, "Where truth is there is *dharma*, . . . where Kṛṣṇa is there is victory" before calling Kṛṣṇa the turner of the wheels of time and space (*kālacakra, jagaccakra, yugacakra*; 66.12).

or terrors; they fight righteously (*dharmeṇa*); "they do not turn away from battle, are endowed with virtues (*dharmopetāḥ*), very powerful, and are joined to the highest prosperity: where *dharma* is there is victory" (*śriyā paramayā yuktā yato dharmas tato jayaḥ*) (6.61.14–16). Again, instead of hearing about Kṛṣṇa and victory, Dhṛtarāṣṭra hears about *dharma* and victory, and is still yet to hear about Kṛṣṇa and *dharma*. That is soon remedied, however. In a reply that includes the third passage cited at the beginning of this section, Saṃjaya now tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra that Duryodhana asked Bhīṣma that same question the night after the fifth day's rout, with the result that Bhīṣma's reply reaches the ears of both royal Kauravas:

> You were formerly forbidden, son, by the Veda-conversant Munis, "Do not go to war with the intelligent Vāsudeva, as also with the Pāṇḍavas." From folly you did not understand this. I think you are a cruel Rākṣasa, and that you are enveloped in darkness (*tamas*). That is why you hate Govinda and the Pāṇḍava Dhanaṃjaya, for would another man hate the godly pair Nara and Nārāyaṇa? Therefore, king, I tell you, this one is indeed everlasting, unfading, always containing the entire world, the Ruler, Placer (Dhātṛ), Upholder (Dhara), the fixed one who holds up (√*dhṛ*) the triple world, the Lord, master of the mobile and immobile, Warrior, Victory (*jaya*), Victor (*jetṛ*), the nature of all, the Lord, O king, made of goodness (*sattva*), this one is divested of darkness and passion (*rāga*). Where Kṛṣṇa is there is *dharma*, where *dharma* is there is victory (*yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato dharmo yato dharmas tato jayaḥ*). By this one's yoga of greatness and also the yoga of his self,[54] the sons of Pāṇḍu are upheld (*dhṛtāḥ*), king, and victory (*jaya*) will be theirs. It is he who always grants the Pāṇḍavas understanding enjoined to the good, and so too strength always in battle, and he protects them too from fears. He is the everlasting god, all made of mystery, blessed (*śiva*). The one whom you ask me about is known as Vāsudeva. He is served and worshiped by noteworthy Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras who are ever joined to their own distinctive jobs (*svakarma*). At the end of the Dvāpara Yuga and the beginning of the Kali Yuga, it is he who is sung of with Saṃkarṣaṇa following the Sātvata rule (*sātvataṃ vidhim āsthāya*).[55]

54. *Mbh* 6.62.35ab: *tasya māhātmyayogena yogenātmana eva ca*. Kṛṣṇa's divine yoga is sometimes hard to translate, and van Buitenen's "supernal yoga" or "divine wizardry" (for *yogam aiśvaram* at *BhG* 9.5b; 1981, 105 and 166 n.3), while recognizing this, is not bad. Cf. his "sovereign yoga" for the same at 11.8d.

55. See González-Reimann 2002, 86, 89–90, on this passage among the "only nine" in the *Mahābhārata* to tie events to this *yuga* juncture, finding all such passages for one reason or another to be "late." On the phrase "Sātvata rule," see *Mbh* 12.322.19a, 23cd in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, with which the *Viśvopākhyāna* is conceptually connected.

> Again and again this Vāsudeva creates the world of mortals and all the Asuras, the cities girt by the sea, and from *yuga* to *yuga* the human habitation. (6.62.30–40)

Duryodhana, of course, refuses to be impressed.

Finally, Bhīṣma brings such terms up one last time when, at the end of his long postwar oration, he asks Kṛṣṇa and the others present for leave to part this world. Amid praising Yudhiṣṭhira for his dedication to noncruelty (*ānṛśaṃsya*) and devotion to his guru, and telling Dhṛtarāṣṭra he should protect the Pāṇḍavas, he tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra that his sons were wicked and should not be grieved, and that Duryodhana ignored Bhīṣma's lesson again and again (and presumably not only in the *Viśvopākhyāna*):

> Formerly I told the slow wicked-minded Duryodhana, "Where Kṛṣṇa is there is victory, where *dharma* is there is victory (*yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato dharmo yato dharmas tato jayaḥ*). With Vāsudeva as refuge (*tīrtha*), son, having soothed the Pāṇḍavas, it is beyond your time for healing. So I said again and again. But that very slow-witted fool did not heed my word. Having right here brought about the marring of the earth, he then died." (13.153.39–41)

Note how the specificities of the earlier citations now fan out into a larger but more imprecise impression of the text. Although we cannot pin down when Bhīṣma kept saying this, Duryodhana heard it from him again and again, including (it seems) "right here" at Kurukṣetra.

Indeed, we learn that Duryodhana also got the more truncated "where *dharma* is there is victory" message repeatedly, and in similar untraceable circumstances, on at least three further occasions from Droṇa and his mother, Gāndhārī. As Karṇa tells Kṛṣṇa in their secret prewar meeting, Droṇa once told Duryodhana, "The man of the white horses [Arjuna] means as much to me as Aśvatthāman [Droṇa's own son]. Why use many words? Where *dharma* is there is victory (*yato dharmas tato jayaḥ*)."[56] With Gāndhārī, it is a matter of reminders of her own utterances to calm her when her sons are no more. When Kṛṣṇa visits her right after Duryodhana's death, he recalls what she told Duryodhana in the Kaurava assembly during Kṛṣṇa's prewar embassy there in Book 5: "Desirous of victory, Duryodhana was addressed this harsh word by you: 'Fool (*mūḍha*), listen to my word: Where *dharma* is there is victory (*yato dharmas tato jayaḥ*)'" (9.62.58). Soon after, as she is nearing the battlefield with Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Vyāsa reads her

56. *Mbh* 5.146.16. Keep in mind that Droṇa's complicity with Arjuna extends into the scenes of his killing; see chapter 9 § E.2.b.

thoughts and makes one of his sudden appearances to deflect her with a reminder of what she said eighteen days earlier when Duryodhana asked her for her prewar blessing: “Desirous of victory, he asked you this time and time again, Gāndhārī, and you told him, ‘Where *dharma* is there is victory (*yato dharmas tato jayaḥ*)’” (11.13.9). Finally, she tells Kṛṣṇa, who is with her as she finds Duryodhana’s corpse and embraces it, that she had resigned herself to his doom: “O Vārṣṇeya, when this war that would annihilate kinsmen stood at hand, this one, this most excellent of kings, his hands folded in respect, said to me, ‘My mother must wish me victory in this war between kinsmen.’ Realizing the whole imminent disaster, I said to him, O tiger among men, ‘Where *dharma* is there is victory (*yato dharmas tato jayaḥ*)’ ” (11.17.5–6). Perhaps, as with Dhṛtarāṣṭra through his wistfulness, Duryodhana may have heard something hopeful in his mother’s words, through his intrepidity and intransigence. It would appear, at least from their last embrace, that they were said with some affection.

Turning now to Yudhiṣṭhira, the lesson comes in parallel but opposite terms in that it falls on open ears, is heeded, and indeed remembered. With this, two things are to be noted. First, Yudhiṣṭhira—unlike Duryodhana but also unlike Arjuna—needs no reminders. Second, he first learns what he needs to know about victory, *dharma*, and Kṛṣṇa in two passages of the *Bhagavadgītāparvan* that surround the *BhG*’s own revelations about *dharma*, and then, at the end of the war, tells Kṛṣṇa that he has heard it even before this from Vyāsa at Upaplavya, presumably somewhere in Book 4 or 5.

As the *Bhagavadgītāparvan* builds up to “the *BhG* proper,” Yudhiṣṭhira tells Arjuna that he is dispirited (*viṣaṇṇam*) at seeing the Kaurava army vaster than theirs. In a passage that includes the first three verses cited at the beginning of this section, Arjuna replies with three insistent assurances that victory comes with either *dharma* (6.21.11d) or Kṛṣṇa (6.21.12d and 14d):

> Listen, king, how fewer men triumph over many talented and shrewd warriors. I shall tell you how, and do not gainsay me. The Ṛṣi Nārada knows it,[57] Pāṇḍava, and so do Bhīṣma and Droṇa.[58] It is told that the Grandfather[59] once said to great Indra and the other celestials concerning this very issue at the battle of the Gods and Asuras, “Those who seek victory win not so much by strength and might as by truth and noncruelty (*ānṛśaṃsya*) and by *dharma* and enterprise. Abandon *adharma*, greed, and delusion,[60] be enterprising, and then fight without thought of ego. Where *dharma* is there is victory (*yato dharmas tato*

57. Arjuna is implying that Nārada would be his source, as he clarifies further along at verse 12.

58. As will be pertinent to their consent to Yudhiṣṭhira, discussed above in the text.

59. That is, Brahmā, but note that at 6.21.3 Yudhiṣṭhira has just been thinking here about “Grandfather” Bhīṣma’s siding with the Kauravas, whom Arjuna has just mentioned.

60. Greed (*lobha*) and delusion (*moha*) seem to be paired opposite to noncruelty and truth, respectively.

> *jayaḥ*)." So know, king, that our victory in battle is assured,[61] for as Nārada has told me, "Where Kṛṣṇa is there is victory (*yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ*)." Victory is a talent with Kṛṣṇa,[62] and it follows closely behind the Mādhava. And no less than victory (*vijaya*) is modesty a virtue (*guṇa*) with him. Govinda of infinite splendor strides unconcernedly among the multitude of his enemies, the most everlasting Puruṣa. Where Kṛṣṇa is there is victory (*yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ*). Once, having become Hari Vaikuṇṭha of the ever-sharp arrows, he said thunderously to the Gods and Asuras, "Who shall win?" And they won who said, "With Kṛṣṇa we shall win!" Indeed, it was by his grace that Śakra and the Gods won the Three Worlds. I see no cause for concern at all, Bhārata, when he, the ruler of the world and the lord of the Thirty, wishes your victory. (6.21.7–17, modifying van Buitenen trans. 1981, 65)

Again, as with the Kaurava kings, we await the conclusion of the *Gītā* for Yudhiṣṭhira to hear the completion of the equation. This occurs in the first *adhyāya* just after the *BhG* proper that closes the *Bhagavadgītaparvan*. Dismounting his chariot with an uncanny purposefulness that reminds us, by contrast, with Arjuna's lack of purpose in dismounting his chariot at the beginning of the *Gītā*, Yudhiṣṭhira walks across the divide between the armies to ask his elders (gurus) on the opposing side not only for their consent to fight them (which, as Kṛṣṇa explains, "as if smiling," brings victory; 16–19) but also how he might kill them. Coming to Droṇa second after Bhīṣma, he says, "Wish me victory, Brahmin, and counsel me for my good. Fight for the Kauravas, that is the boon I ask" (6.41.53); to which Droṇa replies in a passage that includes the second of the citations that opened this section:

> Your victory is assured (cf. 6.21.12b), king, for you have Hari as your counselor (*mantrin*). I recognize you: you shall defeat your foes in battle. Where *dharma* is there is Kṛṣṇa, where Kṛṣṇa is there is victory (*yato dharmas tataḥ kṛṣṇo yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ*).
> Go and fight, Kaunteya. What can I tell you? Ask me. (6.41.54–55)

As we are seeing, the *yatas tatas* revelations reach not only the Pāṇḍavas but the Kauravas, and other ears as well as they fan out into the text. As we shall maintain in the next section, these ripples ring out from *BhG* itself.

Next, then, on the fourteenth day of battle, Vyāsa stops Yudhiṣṭhira from setting off after Karṇa, for whom Yudhiṣṭhira is no match and in any case is Arjuna's sworn foe. In a passage treated prominently in chapter 9, Vyāsa promises Yudhiṣṭhira that in five days the earth will be his and tells him how to keep himself healthy: "Thinking always of *dharma*, O tiger among men, may

61. 6.21.12ab: *dhruvo 'smākaṃ raṇe jayaḥ* (cf. 6.41.54a).

62. Following van Buitenen for *guṇabhūto jayaḥ kṛṣṇe* (6.21.13a).

you be pleased to practice noncruelty (*ānṛśaṃsya*), penance, gift, forbearance, and truth. Where *dharma* is there is victory (*yato dharmas tato jayaḥ*)" (7.158.61–62). Here we have the author intervene to indicate that, for *dharma* to triumph, his protege Yudhiṣṭhira Dharmarāja had better stay alive, and that the conjunction of *dharma* and victory needs a little more time to ripen.

Finally, when the war is over and just before Kṛṣṇa says it would not be good to spend the night with the surviving Pāṇḍava troops, who will be massacred that night in their sleep, Yudhiṣṭhira asks Kṛṣṇa what he is to make of the sudden combustion of Arjuna's chariot outside the tent of the defeated Kauravas just after Kṛṣṇa has ordered Arjuna to dismount from it for the last time. Kṛṣṇa embraces Yudhiṣṭhira and says:

> By good luck (*diṣṭyā*) you conquer, Kaunteya. By good luck your enemies are conquered. By good luck the wielder of the Gāṇḍīva bow [Arjuna] and Bhīmasena Pāṇḍava have escaped from this hero-destroying war, their foes struck down. Quickly do the activities, Bhārata, for the time at hand. When I arrived at Upaplavya, having brought me the honey mixture [the *madhuparka* that is offered to a guest] with the Gāṇḍīva bowman, you formerly told me, "Kṛṣṇa, this Dhanaṃjaya [Arjuna] is your brother and friend (*bhrātā sakhā caiva tava*). He is to be protected in every distress (*sarvāsv-āpatsu*), great armed lord." When you said this, I said, "Yes." This Savyasācin was guarded. Victory is yours, lord of men. With his brothers, king of kings, that champion (*śūra*) of true prowess has escaped from this hair-raising hero-destroying war. Thus addressed by Kṛṣṇa, O king, Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira, his hair bristling, answered Janārdana, "Foe-tamer, when the Brahma-weapon was released by Droṇa and Karṇa, who else than you could prevail in person, even including the thunder-wielding Puraṃdara [Indra]? By your grace the many were conquered in battle, and Pārtha entering the great battle was not one who turned his back. So too, great-armed one, I have obtained an auspicious way of splendor, following diverse activities with many proceedings.[63] At Upaplavya,[64] the great Ṛṣi Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana told me, 'Where *dharma* is there is Kṛṣṇa, where Kṛṣṇa is there is victory (*yato dharmas tataḥ kṛṣṇo yathā kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ*).'" (9.61.21–30)

63. *Mbh* 9.61.29: *tathaiva ca mahābāho paryāyair bahubhir mayā/karmaṇām anusaṃtānaṃ tejasaś ca gatiḥ śubhā*. My translation of this verse is uncertain.

64. *Upaplavye*; or possibly, "During the disaster," since *upaplavya* could have that meaning (see Matilal's translation of this verse [2002, 99]). But since the passage is already talking about Upaplavya as a place, this seems unlikely.

We see how well constructed this set of passages is in continuing to recall Yudhiṣṭhira's initial anxiety over the greater numbers on the Kaurava side, and in introducing matters of friendship and hospitality in conjunction with these formulas about *dharma* and Kṛṣṇa. As with the concluding passage in the sequence concerning Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Duryodhana, the last one in this sequence also opens wider circles of information that leave questions about the main narrative. The description of Kṛṣṇa's welcoming at Upaplavya, the Pāṇḍavas' prewar camp at the end of Book 4 and through most of Book 5, is not drawn from descriptions of his arrival or return there. Nor can we locate the time at Upaplavya when Vyāsa would have told Yudhiṣṭhira that *dharma*, Kṛṣṇa, and victory work together since there is no point in this stretch where Vyāsa is said to have visited the Pāṇḍavas there at all.

Indeed, several of these passages make it a point to attribute the disclosures of this type to one or more of the great Ṛṣis: Nārada, as we have seen, told it to Arjuna. Bhīṣma[65] and Droṇa knew it at 6.21.12. And Rāma Jāmadagnya, Mārkaṇḍeya, Vyāsa, and Nārada are all sources for what Bhīṣma tells Duryodhana in the *Viśvopākhyāna* (at 6.62.27). We shall be discussing these networks of Ṛṣis further in chapter 12. There are also suggestive points regarding Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna. If Yudhiṣṭhira got this message from Vyāsa at Upaplavya, he would have heard it before the *Bhagavadgītaparvan*. And if Arjuna downloads it to Yudhiṣṭhira at the near side of the *Bhagavadgītaparvan*, he would have to have heard it before the *BhG*.

E. *Dharma* Rings in the *Bhagavad Gītā* Proper

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the *Mahābhārata* introduces a number of new conceptualizations of *dharma*, among them the *BhG's* unique theological grounding of *svadharma* and *karmayoga* that would not have appealed to *Manu*. The *BhG* puts the concepts of *svadharma* and *karmayoga* to work as teachings by which an incarnate deity convinces a consummate but irresolute warrior, who is not a king, to fight. Though Arjuna hears several times from Kṛṣṇa about winning the kingdom, it would not be his to rule.[66] Indeed, before we go further, it is important to mention that Kṛṣṇa is not a king either.[67]

65. Bhīṣma has a pipeline to the great Ṛṣis; see Hiltebeitel 2001*b* on his celestial sources as the son of Gaṅgā.

66. The point sets me in opposition to some who have argued otherwise, particularly with regard to the *BhG*: see Biardeau 1981*a*, 93–94, offering a brilliant depiction of Arjuna's *svadharma* as the "ideal king" that, however, sidesteps Yudhiṣṭhira to impose the *BhG*'s *svadharma* on the king's *dharma* (cf. Biardeau 1997, 90; 2002, 1: 155–58); Malinar 2007*a*, 11 calls Arjuna "a potential king" to consider him as a king subordinate to Kṛṣṇa as an *īśvara*, implying cosmic kingship in a "cosmological monotheism" (4–13, 146–48, 233–41).

67. This is a complicating matter with many resonances, beginning with the curse of Yayāti that whereas the descendants of his youngest son Pūru—that is, the Paurava line that will include the Kauravas and

Now although Kṛṣṇa makes the *BhG* the occasion to range over a number of soteriological, philosophical, and practical options that have interested commentarial and scholarly discussion more than what he says about *dharma*, no one would deny he also deserves a reputation in the *BhG* for having things to say about *dharma*. Yet if one puts a few mostly minor passages aside,[68] he really says only a few things about *dharma* per se. Most of his prominent references to *dharma* occur in what I will be calling an informal ring structure: not a formal ring of the type appreciated by folklorists where a text exhibits a self-conscious geometry of units and themes converging on a central nugget,[69] but one that allows the *BhG* to be also about other things to which *dharma* is kept pertinent through deepening reminders of its relevance. There may also be a further ring that is off-center or deferred. We shall examine what these patterns tell us about *dharma* as these rings close in on the text's important teachings.

Let us peel inward starting from the outer layers. In reencountering three familiar terms, I will continue to leave *svadharma* to speak for itself and translate *svabhāva* and *svakarma* as "inherent nature" and "own jobs," respectively.

Ring 1:

1. In the *BhG's* very first words, Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks Saṃjaya what happened "on the field of *dharma* (*dharmakṣetre*), the Kuru field" (*BhG* 1.1), between "my sons," the Kauravas, and their foes.
2. As the *Gītā* ends, Saṃjaya tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra that the last thing Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, before asking him if he understood, was that theirs was a "righteous dialogue"—that is, it was *dharmya*, about *dharma*—and that whoever learns it will offer it up as a sacrifice of knowledge to Kṛṣṇa, and whoever listens to it will be released to blessed worlds (18.70–72).

To grasp this first ring one must know that the *BhG*'s Kṛṣṇa–Arjuna dialogue is framed by a dialogue between Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the blind father of the doomed Kauravas, and the bard Saṃjaya. Thanks to a recent gift of the "divine eye" from

Pāṇḍavas—will inherit his kingship, the descendants of his oldest son Yadu will be "without a share of kingship" (*Mbh* 1.79.7; see Defourny 1976, 134–35). Kṛṣṇa and his Yādava people can thus be called lowly cowherds in Śiśupāla's tirade against Kṛṣṇa in Book 2.

68. *BhG* 9.21, a reference to the *trayīdharma*, "the Law of the three (Vedas)," as applying to temporary destinations in the triple world obtained by desires; 9.31, the higher reward for the *bhakta* who is *dharmātmā*, "of righteous self"; 18.34, a reference to *dharma* along with *kāma* and *artha*. Not minor, however, is 7.11 on Kṛṣṇa's being "the desire in beings that does not run counter to *dharma*," as mentioned in § C.

69. See Tubb 2002; Brodbeck 2006. Cf. D. Hudson 1994, 2001, more pertinent to the approach here and discussed above in the text.

the epic's putative "author" Vyāsa, Saṃjaya can report the entire war account. The *BhG* will end with Saṃjaya telling Dhṛtarāṣṭra that its supreme secret comes to them by "Vyāsa's grace" (18.75).

This framing dialogue makes *dharma* the *BhG*'s very first word, while the last mention of *dharma*, by Kṛṣṇa, confirms the "righteous" nature of the whole exchange. Arjuna then replies that he will stand firm and do as Kṛṣṇa bids with his confusion gone and his memory restored (18.73), after which Saṃjaya again speaks from the frame to wrap things up (74–78). These opening and closing usages are more subtle than they look. Not only is Arjuna's "memory" restored. The ending recalls that when Saṃjaya received the divine eye from Vyāsa (*Mbh* 6.2.9–13; 16.5–10), it was not only so that the blind old king could hear what he would otherwise be missing, but the same for all audiences of the text. Note how Dhṛtarāṣṭra responded to this transaction with the following appeal to Vyāsa, his own father, whom he recognizes as having the real "control" over what will now go into the "textualized memory" (Olivelle 2005*b*, 168, for *smṛti*) of the war: "I beseech you. You are of immeasurable power. You show the way and are firm. They [i.e., my Kaurava sons] are not even under my control, Maharṣi. You can enable me not to commit sin here. Surely you are *dharma*, the purifier, fame, glory, bearing, and memory (*smṛtiḥ*)" (6.4.12–13; see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 55–59). Arjuna's memory is fused into Dhṛtarāṣṭra's, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's into ours.

The *BhG*'s opening has further reverberations. The reference to a "field of *dharma*" recalls that the rules of fair fighting were agreed upon earlier that day, when both sides "established the *dharmas* (laws, rules of engagement) of battle."[70] Most of these rules will be broken on this very field, and not infrequently at the advice of Kṛṣṇa. That this *dharma*-field is "the field of Kuru" also recalls an ancestor of the Kuru line, Kuru, who "made Kurukṣetra meritorious (*puṇyam*) by his austerities" (1.89.44). During the war narrative, we learn that King Kuru did such austerities at Kurukṣetra that he got the boon from Indra that ascetics and warriors who died there in battle would both go straight to heaven cleansed of their wicked acts by its very dust (9.52.13, 18). These uses converge when Bhīṣma is about to give his lengthy *dharma* oration after the war. As Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas come to the spot where Bhīṣma lies on his hero's bed of arrows, Kurukṣetra is called "the field of the whole of the Law" (12.53.23), expanding on the first words of the *BhG* and projecting them toward some kind of completion in the *dharma* instructions of Bhīṣma, which the war's survivors are arriving to hear before he dies and goes to heaven. Further,

70. *Mbh* 6.1.26–33, beginning, "Then the Kurus, Pāṇḍavas, and Somakas made a covenant (*samayaṃ cakruḥ*), and they established the *dharmas* (rules or regulations) of battle (*dharmāṃś ca sthāpayām āsur yuddhānām bharatarṣabha*)." See Matilal 2002, 94–95; Mehendale 1995.

the opening "field" references resonate with what Kṛṣṇa has to say within the *Gītā* about the "field-knower."[71] In the *BhG*'s philosophical context, the "field" of "Nature" is not only the body and mind but the world of cosmic evolutes made up of three ever-entangling "Qualities" (*guṇas*) known as Goodness (*sattva*), Passion (*rajas*), and Darkness (*tamas*), which the "knowing" or "witnessing" Self can level from its transcendent standpoint. This brings out another sense of the "field of *dharma*" as a field where seeds of merit (*dharma*) and demerit (*adharma*) are sown and their fruits reaped.

The *BhG*'s usage of "field-knower" can be illumined by the *Uttara-Yāyāta*, a subtale found earlier in the epic (1.81–88), where Yayāti, another ancestor of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas more ancient in the lineage than Kuru, serves as a kind of Upaniṣadic guide to the afterworld during an interval after he has been bounced out of heaven for a prideful utterance and is headed for hell (see van Buitenen 1967–68; Dumézil 1973, 28–37). Rather exceptionally, he is able to steer himself along the path of his fall, and heads for some smoke he sees rising from the hallowed Naimiṣa Forest, the Twinkling, Blinking, or Winking Forest—a place where epic tales can take strange turns since it marks a point of intersection between heavenly, earthly, and infernal realms.[72] Yayāti is aware that where there's smoke like this, there's a Vedic sacrifice, and thus people who are "good." The smoke turns out to be rising from a Vājapeya sacrifice being performed by his four grandsons, the first of whom, Aṣṭaka, is introduced as "a protector of the rules of the true *dharma* (*saddharmavidhānagoptā*)" (1.83.6d). When Yayāti tells the four who he is and they see him hanging in midair over that hallowed terrain, impressed that such an interloper could be an expert on the "laws" of the "field"[73] of retribution, they each address him in turn using the same quasi-formulaic half line: "You are I think a knower of the field of this *dharma* (*kṣetrajñaṃ tvāṃ tasya dharmasya manye*)" (1.87.8d; 1.87.13d; 1.88.1d; 1.88.6d). Their usage suggests that "this *dharma*" would have the sense of a "doctrine," "law," or "teaching" that the fallen one might impart to them, much as with Yama's *dharma* in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (see chapter 4 § F), and, of course, like the Buddha's *dharma*. The story uses the phrase "knowledge of the field . . . of *dharma*" with reference to its "doctrine" of retribution, which turns

71. In Matilal's terms, *kṣetrajña* brings out another meaning of the *BhG*'s opening words: "*Dharmakṣetra*—the field where the seeds of moral merit/demerit are sown in order to bring forth the harvest of karma or just desert" (2002, 93).

72. I thank Danielle Feller (personal communication, August 2008) for bringing out this point with reference to Sītā's descent from there into the underworld at *Rām* 7.82.13. Cf. Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, 266, 285–93; 2001*a*, 124, 319–20.

73. "As one who possesses knowledge of the field you surely speak the laws" (*kṣetrajñavad bhāṣase tvaṃ hi dharmān*)" (1.84,12d).

out to concern a notion of "merit" (*puṇya*) by which Yayāti's grandsons can transfer their own merits to him to reverse his downward course and enable all five of them to ascend to heaven together. From this we might extrapolate that where Kṛṣṇa concludes the dialogue with Arjuna saying that it "has to do with *dharma*," his portion of that dialogue could also be taken as his "teaching." There is one place in the *BhG* where he uses *dharma* in that way. As Kṛṣṇa prepares Arjuna to see his cosmic divine form, he bills the revelation as a "royal wisdom, royal mystery, and ultimate purifier"[74] that is "lawful" or "about *dharma*" (*dharmya*), and says, "Men who lack faith in this *dharma*, enemy-burner, having failed to reach me, they return to the runaround of deaths" (9.2–3). But for the most part, Kṛṣṇa's teaching is presented not as a single *dharma* but as a variety of "disciplines" or *yogas*.

When Kṛṣṇa says at the far side of Ring 1 that his dialogue with Arjuna has been "righteous" or "about *dharma*," this usage holds some further interests. Saṃjaya also qualifies "this dialogue" twice as "wondrous" and once as "hair-raising" or "enrapturing" (18.74, 76). And Kṛṣṇa speaks of it indirectly as *dharmya* toward the *Gītā*'s middle:

> But those who revere this righteous (*dharmya*) elixir as it has been uttered, having faith (in it?) and intent on me, these devotees are exceedingly dear to me. (12.20)

Moreover, in a *Mahābhārata* that is not only full of dialogues (*saṃvādas*) but set in and sustained by dialogical frame stories, "this righteous dialogue between the two of them (*imaṃ dharmyaṃ saṃvādam āvayoḥ*)" (*BhG* 18.70ab)—that is, between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna—presents the only instance where a *saṃvāda* is described as *dharmya*.

To summarize, Ring 1 first mentions *dharma* in a way that resonates with geographical, political, genealogical, soteriological, ethical, and philosophical ideas, and closes with a confirmation that *dharma* has been what the whole Kṛṣṇa–Arjuna dialogue has been about. When the *BhG* mentions the Kuru Field as a *Dharma* Field in its very first words and closes on its being "about *dharma*," it encircles Kṛṣṇa's argument for "just (*dharmya*) war" (see Ring 3), placing its dialogue in an especially politicized "field of merit" that gives warriors slain there a ticket to heaven and probably still evokes what is left of the

74. As McComas Taylor pointed out at the fifth meeting of the Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas (August 2008), most translators and commentators take *rājavidyā* as a *karmadhāraya* compound, thus "royal wisdom" or "royal science," and not as a *tatpuruṣa* compound, by which Malinar takes it to mean "the knowledge of kings" (2007*a*, 12; 144–50, 225, 232; cf. 180). See further Adluri 2010*d*, 103–5 and above n. 66 on the matter of Arjuna's not being a king.

prestige of the late Ṛgvedic "Kuru state." The compound *Kuru dharma*, "law of the Kurus," has six usages in the *Mahābhārata*, the most interesting being where the Kauravas are said to have (b)reached the "limit of the Kuru *dharma* (*kurudharmavelām*)" (2.60.33) during the disrobing of Draupadī.[75] *Manu* also hallows the place of "the Kurus" as a holy site (8.91) that would lie within his heartland of *dharma* (see chapter 5). And surprisingly, even Buddhist texts acknowledge the region as one where a *Kurudhamma* prepares its public for special teachings that the Buddha is alleged to have imparted there (see chapter 4 § B.1.d.i).

Ring 2:

1. The *BhG*'s principal dialogue first makes *dharma* a focus when Arjuna relates his despondency over fighting kinsmen to his angst about "clan" or "family *dharma*," "the *dharma* of social class by birth," and "class-mixture" (*kuladharma*, *jātidharma*, and *varṇasaṃkara*), and his fear of hell (1.40–44).
2. Kṛṣṇa brings these matters to resolution near the end when he tells Arjuna he should abandon all *dharmas* since Kṛṣṇa will release him from every sin (18.66).[76]

Arjuna explains his famous despondency, which brought him to lay down his weapons, as arising from the "the taint caused by destruction of the clan" or "family" (*kula*; 1.38–39). But the heart of it is a horror of class-mixture, really miscegenation. His argument is that if he kills his relatives, *adharma* will result for his clan and social class because the women of the clan will become corrupt and engage in mixed unions. If that occurs, the clan's ancestors will go to hell because no one will perform their rites, and he himself will go to hell for bringing all this about (40–44). There have been attempts to widen the scope of "Arjuna's dilemma." One is to interpret it as an aversion, however fleeting, to war and killing. But the word for what makes Arjuna despondent, *kṛpa*, by which he is twice said to be "possessed" (1.28; 2.1), means "pity" before "compassion," and is the first thing Arjuna asks for clarity on, admitting that he is "afflicted by the taint" of it (2.7). A paragon warrior, Arjuna is pitying those he has been so well trained to kill—especially, we may guess, for his guru Droṇa

75. Draupadī reincarnates as Belā in the Hindi oral epic, *Ālhā*, which equals Velā, "the Limit," in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*; see Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, 125–37 and *passim*. See also 1.97.11c; 3.131.12d; 8.23.46c and 14.77.37c (*kurudharmajña*), and 12.192.96c (*kurudharmam adharmaṃ vā*).

76. Note, this all parallels Yudhiṣṭhira's fear of falling into hell, but the larger problems (social class for Arjuna, life-stages for Yudhiṣṭhira) and the solutions differ.

who did that training of Arjuna, as we saw in chapter 9. Another is to consider his dilemma as a conflict of duties within the framework of the Law of Class and Life-stage. Along with being a Kṣatriya, Arjuna is married, and has been imagined to be pinioning his domestic duties over against an inclination toward renunciation and nonviolence. Cited in this regard is a verse where he says it would be "better to enjoy almsfood" than "enjoyments smeared with blood" (2.5). But Arjuna remains focussed entirely on the clan and class issues of killing his elders and does not, as Yudhiṣṭhira does after the war, consider the beggar option a real one.[77] Indeed, the *BhG* never mentions "life-stage" considerations at all.

We may thus say that when Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna at the far side of Ring 2 that he should abandon all *dharmas*, which may, as Śankara has maintained, refer as well to *adharmas* (Sharma 1986, 89), he would be referring above all to those that have reduced Arjuna to this temporary inaction and pity. Though the verse uses the root √*muc*, "to release," when Kṛṣṇa says "I will free you from all sins," he is not talking about *mokṣa* as final liberation. As Ring 3 now makes evident, for Kṛṣṇa to release Arjuna from every sin will still hold him to doing his Kṣatriya duties, but in a new spirit of abandoning desire for fruits or results.

Ring 3:

1. Kṛṣṇa gets Arjuna to concentrate his multiple *dharma* anxieties on just one matter: Kṣatriya *svadharma*. When Arjuna says his inherent nature (*svabhāva*) is afflicted by the taint of what comes from pity and asks Kṛṣṇa to relieve his confusion about *dharma* (2.7), Kṛṣṇa answers that a Kṣatriya can find nothing better than a "lawful" or "just war" in which "either you are killed and go to heaven" or "win and enjoy the earth" (2.31–37). Kṛṣṇa then rounds off the point with two adages: first, that a little *dharma* goes a long way (2.40); and second, that doing "one's *svadharma*" is better than doing another's (3.55) because "the best" is the man who acts disinterestedly for the "holding together of the world" (*lokasaṃgraha*), just as Kṛṣṇa does himself (3.19–26).
2. This round of topics is brought to resolution, still near the end, when Kṛṣṇa explains *svadharma* in terms of each of the four social classes' "own jobs" and inherent natures (18.41–47).

77. Contrary to Matilal 2002, 74 (see 43–44, 73–74), Arjuna is not thinking of becoming "a sanyāsin or a wandering monk rather than a king" (*sic*) at *BhG* 2.5, where he mentions his preference for "eating almsfood" (*bhaikṣyam*). Although Arjuna's dilemma goes deeper, in this verse he is only making a spur-of-the-moment judgment; and he is not a king. Indeed, Matilal himself recognizes that the beggar option is not real (2002, 8).

Ring 3 concerns the duties specific to a warrior. That is what Arjuna truly is, and not a king. Modeled on the warrior, each social class will work for the "holding together of the world" by doing its *svadharma* in the "own jobs" that are inherent to them.

The correspondences between the near and far sides of ring 3 are the clearest we encounter, as is the movement toward closure. The central passage on the near side reads:

> Look to your *svadharma* and do not waver, for a Kṣatriya can find nothing better than a lawful war. It is an open door to heaven, happily happened upon; and blessed are the warriors, Pārtha, who find a war like that! Or suppose you will not engage in this lawful war: then you give up your *svadharma* and honor and incur sin. (2.31–33)

The idea of "lawful" or "just" (*dharmya*) war is challenging. It cannot refer to the compact both sides make to fight fairly, which Kṛṣṇa himself will ignore. But it would have behind it the justice of the Pāṇḍavas' cause, and, coming from Kṛṣṇa, the fact that he was the last to make efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement. In legally representing the Pāṇḍava cause, however, Kṛṣṇa was speaking primarily for Yudhiṣṭhira, the Dharma King. Here he is speaking to Arjuna, for whom he has reduced what is "lawful" entirely to Kṣatriya *dharma*—indeed, to Kṣatriya *svadharma*, which promises heaven for those who die in battle. Although *Manu* also says that slain warriors go to heaven (7.89), it is worth mentioning the Buddha's nonconcurrence on this point. When pressed by martial types of "headmen" (*gāmaṇi*) who are clearly dubious about such guarantees, he revealed with great reluctance that a soldier who dies in battle does not go to heaven but to the "Battle-Slain Hell," since he dies with "his mind already low, depraved" and "misdirected" toward killing others (*SN*, *Gāmaṇisaṃyutta* 3–5).[78] Yet Buddhism influenced another usage that could point to a deeper sense. This is the idea broached by Aśoka after the terrible Kalinga war, that henceforth he "considers conquest by *dhaṃma* the most important conquest" (see chapter 2). The real "just war" would be the one fought within. Gandhi brought out this interpretation of Arjuna's true battle in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and with it the idea that *svadharma* means something like "conscience."[79]

78. See Schmithausen 1999, 48 citing three "almost identical sermons" in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* [*SN* 4.308–11]; Bodhi 2000, 1334–36 translates only the first one. Though the Buddha is reluctant to say this because he expects the soldier to take it poorly, the soldier replies gratefully upon realizing that he has "been tricked, cheated, and deceived for a long time by those mercenaries of old" (Bodhi 2000, 1335). See Sinha 1991, 374–82 more widely on the *Nikāyas'* "scathing criticism" of *kshattavijja* ("*kṣatriya* science")—a term perhaps that reduces it to something more ordinary than *dharma*.

79. I have long believed I owe this attribution to Rudolph and Rudolph 1967, but I cannot now locate the term in question there.

On the far side of Ring 3, Kṛṣṇa is not encouraging of such an interpretation. Backed up by his final words on the three Qualities of Matter, he returns to the topic of *svadharma* after explaining the proper functioning of the four social classes:

> The jobs of Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras, enemy-burner, are distinguished according to the Qualities that spring from their inherent nature. Tranquility, restraint, austerity, purity, patience, uprightness, knowledge, discernment, and orthodoxy are the Brahmin's job born from his inherent nature. Championing, energy, bearing, skill, not fleeing in battle, the gift, and lordly nature are the Kṣatriya's job born from his inherent nature. Agriculture, herding, and trade are the Vaiśya's job, born from his inherent nature, while the inherent nature born to the Śūdra has the character of service. Contented each in his own job, a man attains complete fulfillment. Engaged in his own job, hear how he finds that perfection. A man finds perfection by his own job having worshiped him by whom all this is strung, whence beings are motivated to activity. Better one's *svadharma* imperfectly performed than another's *dharma* done perfectly; doing the job regulated by his inherent nature, he does not incur fault. (18.40–47)

However, one translates *karman* here, which I have rendered as "jobs," one should not obscure the distinction between the last "job" reference and the one closing instance of *svadharma*, as some have done by fudging *karman* there as "duties." Kṛṣṇa is fine-tuning a well-known *dharmaśāstra* job scheme.

Clearly, there has been movement here from one side of Ring 3 to the other. While the last verse, beginning "Better one's *svadharma*," has the same famous first line as a verse on the near side of this ring, their second lines differ. In the earlier verse, the second line simply reinforces Kṣatriya *svadharma*: "Better death in one's *svadharma*; another's *dharma* brings danger" (3.35). In the later verse, the second line refers *svadharma* back to the two terms that govern the passage, *karma* and *svabhāva*: "doing the job regulated by his inherent nature, he does not incur fault." No longer needing to convince Arjuna to do his Kṣatriya *svadharma*, Kṛṣṇa now uses the Kṣatriya as the role model to talk about the jobs of all four social classes. More than that, he ontologizes each job in its respective inherent nature. Here Kṛṣṇa finally straightens out the issue of "class-mixture" that defined *adharma* for Arjuna (1.38–44) and paralyzed him down to *his* inherent nature (2.7).

On the near side of Ring 3, when Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna how "the best" act disinterestedly for the "holding together of the world" (3.20, 25), he says that if he himself did not do this "untiringly, at all times, people all around would follow

my lead. These people would collapse if I did not act: I would be the author of mixing" (3.23–24)—which certainly includes "mixing of classes." Now at the far side of Ring 3, men of each social class can find perfection through contentment in their own jobs, having worshiped Kṛṣṇa as the lord who motivates all beings who are "strung like strands of pearls upon a string" (7.7), and a string that is "unmanifest" (9.4). Every "inherent nature" comes from "the over-soul," meaning Kṛṣṇa, in the first place (3.30, 7.29, 8.3).

Warrior *svadharma* thus gives a certain patina to everyone else's "own job." It is this kind of scheme that Kṛṣṇa is reformulating at the far side of Ring 3: one whose basics are found in all our classical Brahmanical *dharma* texts. This returns us to the question, "Who really has *svadharma*?" Despite what has been written on the premise that *svadharma* provides a kind of cosmic moral matrix for every individual human and other being, not to mention every individual action, we have seen that there is not much evidence that the concept has such a global reach. On the contrary, it is the *svakarma* of the Brahmin that provides the paradigm that models the activities of other classes on prerogatives grounded in sacrificial ritual. Kṣatriya *svadharma*, on the other hand, is a role model for all classes to fulfill duties that uphold the Brahmanical order.[80]

Ring 4:

1. Kṛṣṇa claims that he himself is the restorer of *dharma* (4.7–8).
2. Arjuna, during his exhilarated description of Kṛṣṇa's revelation of his divine form, accepts this, seeing that Kṛṣṇa is "the unchanging protector of the everlasting *dharma*" (*śāśvatadharmagoptā*; 11.18).

So far, most of our *dharma* citations have come from the *BhG*'s edges: on the near side, from chapters 1 to 3, and on the far side all from chapter 18. When it comes to Kṛṣṇa's revelations at the *Gītā*'s center, things get more diffuse. But it is simple enough to appreciate that the two passages just cited define a fourth ring. On one side, we have come to the famous passage where Kṛṣṇa reveals how he provides divine intervention whenever *dharma* is negatively affected in the course of time:

> Whenever there is a waning of *dharma* and a surge of *adharma*,
> O Bhārata, then I create myself; for the complete rescue of the good
> and for the destruction of the wicked, for the sake of the establishment
> of *dharma* I come into being from *yuga* to *yuga*. (4.7–8)

80. I use role model in the sense of Robert Merton, the term's coiner, for whom it meant someone who sets a model for a narrowly defined behavior. See Hiltebeitel 2004*b*.

Here we have an idea with a long future, for the theme of Viṣṇu as Preserver of *dharma* comes to be associated with the *avatāra* doctrine of "incarnation" or, preferably, divine "descent" (see chapters 6 and 12). Even though the prevailing intention of Western "higher criticism" has been to explain away as late "developments" every passage in both epics that could relate to this doctrine, there are much better reasons to think that it is under construction in them from their very conception—and I do not think that these verses would be an exception. Meanwhile, on the farther side of Ring 4, as Arjuna stands in awe before Kṛṣṇa's Universal Form, we hear him say,

> You are the highest syllable to be known, you are the supreme resting place of this all, you are the unchanging protector of the everlasting *dharma*, I hold you to be the eternal Puruṣa. (11.18)

Here, where Kṛṣṇa will soon reveal himself to be "Time grown old for the destruction of the worlds" and urge Arjuna to be Time's "mere instrument" (11.33), we again see movement. First, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that he rescues *dharma* from *yuga* to *yuga*; next, he moves on to explain his vaster role in bringing about creation and dissolution through the rhythm of *kalpas* (9.7–8); and only after that will Arjuna recognize him to be "the unchanging protector of the everlasting *dharma*." Moreover, between this recognition and learning that Kṛṣṇa is "Time grown old," Arjuna twice cries out "O Viṣṇu!" (11.24, 30).

This ring's verses bearing on *dharma* over divinely ordered time thus form a powerful overarching statement. Yet what they overarch is Kṛṣṇa's instructions on living *dharma* over ordinary time experientially. With patience and affection for Arjuna, he fine-tunes this instruction all over the *BhG* text not only for Arjuna but, by the grace of Vyāsa, for the inner warrior in anyone.

A Ring Off-Center?

If, nonetheless, we ask whether the *BhG* offers a central focus on *dharma*, we should know that it will remain a question. I believe there are four choices. The first and simplest is to take Arjuna's euphoric description of Kṛṣṇa as "the protector of everlasting *dharma*" to be that center. It has the merit of being the one mention of *dharma* in the famous eleventh chapter, which some would take as the acme of the *BhG* in that it discloses its theophanic structure. Another would be for the *Gītā* to have saved its deepest disclosure for the verse where Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna he should abandon all *dharmas* since Kṛṣṇa will release him from every sin (18.66). For Śrī Vaiṣṇava sectarians of Viṣṇu, this verse is called the *Gītā*'s *carama śloka* or "final, summarizing verse." Yet if our analysis has any merit, either would be a disappointing conclusion, since both occur on the far

sides of rings rather than at any real center. An interesting candidate nested within all four rings has been mentioned. This is the one instance where Kṛṣṇa speaks of *dharma* in the sense of his "teaching" or "doctrine": "Men who lack faith in this *dharma*, enemy-burner, having failed to reach me, they return to the runaround of deaths" (9.2–3). This is a fairly powerful verse, and it has clear soteriological implications, but of a negative sort. Arjuna would have a right to expect something more positive from Kṛṣṇa, who has moved him beyond his initial fear of going to hell.

This brings us to our final candidate, which takes a little explaining as to how it could be at a heart of things. In introducing the subject of *dharma* rings circling around and within the *BhG*, I have referred to the possibility that the *Gītā*'s deepest message on *dharma* may be lodged in a center that seems off-center or deferred to its twelfth to sixteenth chapters. Dennis Hudson has proposed that these five chapters have what has been called a "barleycorn" structure, with chapter 14 as the kernel. To simplify, having resolved Arjuna's familial and class anxieties in chapters 1 to 6, and built up to his awesome theophany from chapters 7 to 11, Kṛṣṇa now pauses to tell Arjuna some of the *BhG*'s deep implications, couching them as secrets and mysteries. Given that chapters 12 and 16 and 13 and 15 can be read as continuous discussions, chapter 14 would lie at the center of this pattern, possibly on the analogy of the fourteenth night being that of the full moon, and marking a transition from the increasingly luminous to the gathering darkness. Looked at in this fashion, after closing chapter 16 on the topic of "demonic people," Kṛṣṇa would devote chapter 17 to people of different faiths before offering the encouraging closures of chapter 18 (cf. D. Hudson 2001).

There are some problems with this theory (see Hiltebeitel 2002), but they diminish as one works inward. Chapters 12 and 16 can be read continuously only as a discussion of the virtues and vices held by people of different natures. Kṛṣṇa mentions four types of devotees who are each dear to him in chapter 12, and briefly takes up "divine people" (who may be the same as those mentioned in chapter 12) in chapter 16 before getting to the "demonic people" just mentioned. Chapters 13 and 15, however, feel more thematically continuous: the former introduces Kṛṣṇa as the field-knower who in the latter plants the first seed that yields the cosmic upside-down fig tree, which Kṛṣṇa invites Arjuna to fell at its roots with the axe of detachment. This seeding theme readily relates to the kernel verses of chapter 14. This is how Kṛṣṇa begins that chapter:

> Further I shall declare the supreme knowledge of knowledges
> knowing which all the Munis have gone from this world to supreme
> success. Having resorted to this knowledge, they came to have the

> same nature as me (*mama sādharmyam*). Even at the Creation they do not take birth, and they are not disturbed at the Dissolution. My womb is the great *brahman*. . . . (14.1–3)

Clearly, these words meet our criteria for being a kernel about *dharma*. Their message is positive. They seem to be centered in a ring of five chapters: albeit off-center from our other rings, yet in a ring-pattern plausibly designed for them. And their first verse is obvious about declaring its centrality as "the supreme knowledge of knowledges." But what is *dharma* here, and what is the positive message?

Most translators have found ways to translate *sādharmyam* without making obvious reference to any of the usual meanings of *dharma*. But there is no good reason to be obscure. The term derives from *sa-dharma*, which can mean either "having the same nature" or "subject to the same laws or duties." Clearly, the former is preferable,[81] as it is when *Manu* says the "delinquent-born" and Śūdras "have the same natures" (*M* 10.41). Much as when Kṛṣṇa describes himself as "Time grown old for the destruction of the worlds" (11.33), his "nature" survives the Creation and Dissolution of the universe. This befits a god credited not only with preserving the universe but the eternal *dharma*. Yet the good news is more immediate. The Munis who "have gone from this world to supreme success" have the "same nature as me," being neither reborn nor disturbed. It is on that note that Kṛṣṇa continues to be reassuring:

> My womb is the great *brahman*. In it I place the germ and the origin of all beings comes about, Bhārata. In all wombs, Kaunteya, whatever forms come into being, the great *brahman* is their womb. I am the father who bestows the seed. (14.3–4)

From this point Kṛṣṇa begins talking about the three Qualities of Nature and the types of bondage each incurs, yet which can be transcended by attaining Kṛṣṇa's "being" (*bhāva*; 19).

We may find it surprising after all the talk about Kṣatriya *dharma*, and in particular Kṣatriya *svadharma*, to find Kṛṣṇa telling Arjuna that the model for attaining "my being" (*mad-bhāvam*)—which would have to be Kṛṣṇa's *svabhāva*—lies in the Munis who have "the same *dharma* as me," in that they survive Creations and Dissolutions of the universe unaffected and undisturbed. Yet Arjuna has been prepared to understand this in the *BhG* itself. Earlier, he has been told how the Munis and Ṛṣis are yogins who attain "the felicity of *Brahman*" (*brahma-nirvāṇa*) and "become *brahman* (*brahma-bhūta*)" (5.24):

81. And usually preferred, although see Thompson 2008, 67, who, in his usually careful translation, takes, I believe, the less likely alternative and, without explanation, uses two words to translate *dharma*: "come to have the same *virtues and duties* that I have."

> The Ṛṣis obtain the felicity of *brahman*, their sins destroyed, their doubts cleft, their selves restrained, delighted in the welfare of all beings. To ascetics detached from desire and anger, their minds tamed, who know themselves, the felicity of *brahman* lies near. Keeping outside contacts out, centering the eye between the eyebrows, evening out inhalation and exhalation within the nostrils, controlling the senses, mind, and spirit, the Muni intent upon *mokṣa*, whose desire, fear, and anger are gone, is released forever. Knowing that I am the recipient of sacrifices and austerities, the great lord of all the world, the friend of all beings, he attains peace. (5.25–29)

Unlike such Sages, however, Arjuna, when he was given the divine eye to witness Kṛṣṇa's Universal Form as Creator and Destroyer, *was* affected, indeed overwhelmed, left stammering and bowing in adoration, imploring Kṛṣṇa to show his grace "as a father to a son, as a friend to a friend, as a beloved to a beloved" (11.44).

Kṛṣṇa's theophany may make his case for Kṣatriya *svadharma* overwhelming, but he is not rushing his friend Arjuna on the deeper matters. Earlier, he has told him it takes a while to take in what he is saying:

> For there is no purifier here the like of knowledge; in time, one who is perfected by yoga finds that in himself. The one who has faith obtains knowledge, intent upon it, his senses controlled; having obtained knowledge, in not a long time he finds the highest peace. (4.38–39; cf. 5.6)

Mindful of Kṛṣṇa's relaxed approach, let us now look at how chapter 14, proposed as a deferred center, closes after Arjuna has learned that attaining "the supreme knowledge of knowledges" has to do not only with being, like the Munis, of the "same nature" as Kṛṣṇa, but with transcending the three Qualities of Nature to attain Kṛṣṇa's own "being."

Arjuna wants to know the traits and conduct of one who transcends the three Qualities, and how one does it. Kṛṣṇa replies:

> He does not hate illumination, activity, and even delusion when they arise, Pāṇḍava, nor wish for them when they have ceased. Sitting as one who is sitting apart, who is not agitated by the Qualities, thinking only, "The Qualities are at work," who remains firm and is not stirred; who is the same in happiness and unhappiness, self-abiding, for whom clods, stones, and gold are the same, alike to those dear and undear, steady, alike to blame and self-praise, alike to honor and dishonor, alike to the sides of friend and foe, who abandons all

> undertakings, he is said to have transcended the Qualities. And he who serves me with unswerving *bhaktiyoga*, having transcended these Qualities, is fit for becoming *brahman*. For I am the foundation of *brahman*, of the immortal and the unchanging, of the everlasting *dharma*, and of the absolute happiness. (14.21–27)

Kṛṣṇa not only allows that Arjuna will need time to digest what he has to say; he says, do not hate what arises from the three Qualities—illumination from Goodness, activity from Passion, or even delusion or bewilderment (*moha*) from Darkness, or wish for whatever of them has ceased. This could describe how Kṛṣṇa or the Sages experience the Qualities, or it could be preparing Arjuna for a long, passionate, and bewildering war.[82] The three Qualities function here something like the Buddhist *dharma* theory: one should not be attached to them as they rise and fall, they are not what one really is. But to know the "knowledge of knowledges" is to know that they arise from Matter that is seeded by Kṛṣṇa as the "womb of the great *Brahman*" in which all selves find their origin, and their absolute happiness and highest felicity. For that knowledge to make one "fit for becoming *brahman*," it would also recall the earlier passage just cited (5.24–29), where "becoming *Brahman*" was likewise used to describe the Ṛṣis and Munis' attainment of *brahma-nirvāṇa*, which I have translated as "the felicity of *brahman*." Although it is controversial, the fact that the *BhG* makes such a strong use of the term *brahma-nirvāṇa* in conjunction with "becoming *brahman*," which is also used in early Buddhist texts to describe *nibbāna* and even the Buddha's attainment of it (see *SN* iv. 94–95), is probably an indication, one of many, that the *Mahābhārata* wants Kṛṣṇa to be saying something different from the Buddha.

The *BhG* does not tell us what Arjuna makes of this "knowledge of knowledges" that reveals the endgame of *bhaktiyoga*, or how he factors these interludes about the Ṛṣis into his more pressing concerns with Kṣatriya *svadharma*. But these passages are suggestive for getting at what the *Mahābhārata*, and probably also the *Rāmāyaṇa*, has to say about the relation between *dharma* and *bhakti*, the topic of our next chapter. Let us anticipate a finding we shall meet there, that the *Mahābhārata* speaks of a lofty concept it calls both "the *dharma* of the Ṛṣis" and "the *dharma* of the Munis," and ask, on the hypothesis that

82. See also *BhG* 18.30–32: whereas the sattvic temperament has the intellect (*buddhi*) with which to discriminate *pravṛtti* (worldly activity) and *nivṛtti* (cessation from activity), things to be done (*kārya*) and not to be done (*akārya*), and bondage from *mokṣa*, the rajasic and tamasic temperaments have, respectively, the *buddhi* only to incorrectly discriminate between *dharma* and *adharma* and to confuse them. These latter two temperaments may thus have the capacity to know right from wrong, but are prone to mistake or muddle them and need the sattvic temperament to tell them what is "to be done." This of course restates the *svakarma*/*svadharma* opposition in terms of the *guṇas*.

Kṛṣṇa could be talking about it, what the *BhG* would have told us about this unusual *dharma*. From these passages, we can start out minimally with this. If Kṛṣṇa and the liberated Ṛṣis know themselves to have "the same nature," and if Arjuna could know this too, given time (and Time), it would relate to a delight in the "welfare of all beings" and a friendship extended to "friend and foe alike."

Finally, if *BhG* 14 gives us the deferred heart of what the *Gītā* has to say about *dharma*, it is not so much a center as another ring, beginning with *dharma* in the sense of Kṛṣṇa's ultimate salvific "nature" and ending with the "everlasting *dharma*" that has its foundation in Kṛṣṇa like the *brahman* one can become through knowledge and unswerving *bhaktiyoga*. I suggest we think of this centerless ring as centered in "becoming *brahman*" like the perfected Ṛṣis who attain *brahman*'s felicity, coming "to have the same nature as me": a golden ring to catch while the merry-go-round goes round.

12

Dharma and *Bhakti*

A felicitous contrast made by Madeleine Biardeau offers us a point of departure for this chapter. Whereas the *Mahābhārata* marks a *bhakti* "swerve" (*écart*) in the Brahmanical tradition, *Manu*, she says, "'budges' as little as possible" in its allegiance to the Veda (2002, 1: 85, 87, 96). My working hypothesis for this chapter is that *Manu* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, both probably from around the same time and a little younger than the *Mahābhārata*, could have shared a perception that the *Mahābhārata*'s treatment of *dharma* was ambiguous and its presentation of *bhakti* amorphous—an indecisive and potentially exasperating combination that each would seek to tighten up, but in different ways: *Manu*, by screening out *bhakti* and getting orthodox about *dharma*; the *Rāmāyaṇa*, by streamlining and straightening out both *dharma* and *bhakti* around the figure of a royal perfect man. For *Manu*, *bhakti* was not germane to its programs of making *dharma* a primordial civilizational value and averting upheaval by reinforcing orthopraxy. For Vālmīki, who may have felt less agitation about the heterodoxies than these other two texts,[1] but who would seem to have shared *Manu*'s worries about uprising Śūdras,[2]

1. See Biardeau 1999, xxxiv–xxxv, seeing both epics as "ripostes" to "imperial Buddhism," but with "le menace" less present in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where the incarnation of Viṣṇu (Rāma) is more "ancient" than Kṛṣṇa and does not, like Kṛṣṇa, yet have a cult on the ground in northern India; and where the "présence d'un danger bouddhique" is displaced on to Rākṣasas who have their southern base in distant Laṅkā, "an island that has just been converted."

2. On *Manu* and Śūdras, see chapter 5 § E. The *Rāmāyaṇa* takes this stance in its story of Rāma's killing of the upstart Śūdra Śambūka (7.65), mentioned briefly in chapter 11 § A. A reference to this story occurs at *Mbh* 12.149.61–63; see Brockington 1998, 427; Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 770.

divinity could be useful in portraying an ancient king. On such a figure, he could focus a few of the *bhakti* themes developed in the *Mahābhārata*, but often shading the term *bhakti* to mean "loyalty" rather than "devotion"[3]—as more befitting a divine king (such as one meets also in *Manu*) than a divine friend like Kṛṣṇa.

Keeping *Manu* in mind as what might be called an interested but *bhakti*-allergic onlooker, a book on *dharma* offers an opportunity to think about how *bhakti* and *dharma* are related in the two epics. Rather than looking at them for ways to separate out *bhakti* and *dharma* into isolable thematic strands[4] or strata,[5] it could be fruitful to map *dharma* and *bhakti* in both epics together. But what kind of cartography best suits this two-text terrain? As I have maintained at various points in chapters 9 and 11, it would not be a matter of making the centrality of the *Bhagavad Gītā* a pretext to read *karmayoga*, with or without its *bhaktiyoga*-overtones, as a cross-the-board hermeneutic. Yet the *Gītā* does point out a useful direction. For one thing, in being—at least as we have it—a didactic *bhakti* text, it reminds us that the vast scholarly operation of separating out *bhakti* from *dharma* (as the "didactic," along with other strands, like "epic philosophy") has always required a certain artistry in keeping such things separate.[6] More constructively, though, the *Gītā* is also a text that displays the two features that I have found most useful in mapping the relation between *dharma* and *bhakti* across both epics. One is friendship, which has provided the primary contour lines in three essays I have written on "mapping *bhakti* in the Sanskrit epics": the first, mapping *bhakti* with just friendship; the second, mapping it with hospitality and friendship; and the third, mapping it with friendship, hospitality, and separation.[7] The other feature is the notion of a divine plan. In this case, writing this book about *dharma* has led me for the first time to try to seriously address this topic. I broached the relation been *dharma* and the

3. But see *Rām* 2.40.27 (as Rāma leaves Ayodhyā all moving and unmoving things have devotion to him and ask his devotion to them); 6.105.28 (men of devotion will praise Rāma as God now that he has slain Rāvaṇa). More as "loyalty," see 2.46.30 (Rāma's charioteer Sumantra asks him out of loyalty to return to Ayodhyā); 3.15.25 (Bharata remains loyal to Rāma).

4. Fitzgerald, who is fond of the metaphor of "threads" running through the *Mahābhārata*, speaks to "the potential value of a careful mapping of the thematic threads of the vast epic" (2006*a*, 272), and has offered ways to reorient discussion principally around the politics of that text. He makes a good point that the *Mahābhārata* poets have a political agenda centered on the vigorous promotion of *varṇadharma*, *svadharma*, a king empowered with the rod of punishment (*daṇḍa*), and the abhorrence of *varṇasaṃkara* (mixture of social classes), and that this agenda is intelligible in a post-Mauryan setting (2006*a*, 275–77). Regarding *bhakti*, however, his practice is to map it out as "late."

5. Brockington 1998 has done the most to isolate *dharma* and *bhakti* in the epics into separable textual units, from as small as the verse to as large as whole books, so as to date additions to the supposedly original bardic heroic core.

6. The problem comes up most interestingly in the *Mokṣadharma Parvan*, where a prominent *bhakti* unit, the *Nārāyaṇīya*, comes near the end. In Hiltebeitel 2005*d*, 259–61, I mentioned Zaehner 1963 and Brockington 2000*b* as shedding some light on this question, which I will return to in chapter 13.

7. See Hiltebeitel 2010*a*; in press, and 2011*a*, chapter 11 respectively. See also Hiltebeitel 2007a, and for initial discussion of separation, chapter 10 § D.

epics' divine plans in chapter 6, and have used the term repeatedly since then—except in chapter 11, where the *Bhagavad Gītā* makes mentioning it superfluous. Mapping *dharma* and *bhakti* in the *Mahābhārata*'s divine plan now also provides the occasion to develop a point noticed briefly in chapters 1 and 7: that the *Mahābhārata* represents itself as including the *Harivaṃśa* as its "Appendix."

A. Mapping the Divine Plans

A few words are in order about where we are already with the project of mapping these epical divine plans, how we can proceed further, and how mapping divine plans will tie in with mapping friendship, hospitality, and separation. First, we may distinguish the divine plans of the epics from Brahmā's undertaking of instituting *dharma* for all times (including *yugas* and *manvantaras*) through Manus, since the latter includes no supernatural incarnations. Second, here in three steps is what we have mapped so far of the divine plans of the epics themselves.[8]

1. We have reached a point where we are able to discern something about the beginning and duration of the divine plans in both epics. In the *Mahābhārata*, from one angle, the divine plan seems to kick in with Gaṅgā's intervention in the Pūru–Bhārata–Kuru lineage; and, from another, to be fulfilled at some indeterminate or variously described point in the transition between the Dvāpara and Kali *yugas*.[9] The *Rāmāyaṇa*'s divine plan follows from the loophole in the boon Rāvaṇa obtains from Brahmā: the gods can take advantage of the fact that, because Rāvaṇa disdained men, he did not request invulnerability from them.[10] Each epic also has singular episodes that offer confirmations that things are moving along according to plan. Some are abrupt and unsettling, like Kṛṣṇa's little dance at the death of Ghaṭotkaca,[11] or the Ṛṣis' "thrill" at the abduction of Sītā

8. Some of this section is distilled in Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*g*.

9. On Gaṅgā's intervention, see chapter 8 § C. For some discussion of the "twilight" transition between the Dvāpara and Kali *yugas*, see chapter 6 §§ C and D and chapter 7 § A. The most arresting of the *Mahābhārata*'s nine passages (see González-Reimann 2002, 86) to describe the Dvāpara–Kali transition pinpoints the Kali *yuga*'s arrival, in Kṛṣṇa's words, to the fall of Duryodhana after he has been dealt a low blow to the thigh by Bhīma (*Mbh* 9.59.21). It is the only one of the nine for which González-Reimann can do nothing stratigraphic to say it is "late," since it is part of the main story and, moreover, spoken by Kṛṣṇa. So he resorts to the most unconvincing types of higher critical explanations: it "would have been inserted" to explain "the blatant breach of dharma this incident entails," and its "probable lateness . . . can also be gleaned at from the fact that it is put into Kṛṣṇa's mouth" (101–2). For different interpretations of this episode, see Biardeau 1994, 45–47; 1997*a*, 111; Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 152–53 n. 92.

10. See Pollock 1984, cited in chapter 9 n. 6 and chapter 10 n. 15.

11. See chapter 9 § E.2.b, and see Couture 2001, 322 on Kṛṣṇa's dance maneuvers as avataric stagecraft in the killing of Kaṃsa.

(*Rām* 3.50.10–11), cited below. Others are long awaited and more affirmative, as when the Great Ṛṣis on the Hundred Peak Mountain give names to the newborn Pāṇḍavas "with *bhakti*" (chapter 8 § H), or when the three eldest Pāṇḍavas confirm support from their divine paternal connections, and in Arjuna's case from Śiva, in *Mahābhārata* Book 3;[12] or when Rāma challenges the Ocean to allow him passage to Laṅkā (*Rām* 6.14). Many of these scenes can be called *bhakti* tableaux,[13] and once one is accustomed to recognizing them, they are not hard to find or easy to ignore. One can also track the divine plans in the epics' great royal rituals, the Rājasūya and Aśvamedha, which are, as sacrifices, already arenas in which the gods, in principle, can touch base on earthly matters that concern them.

2. We have identified two terms that index the divine plans dispositively in both epics. Most significant so far, because of the way it has allowed us to detect outcroppings of the divine plan in the *Mahābhārata*, is "the work of the gods" (*devakārya, surakārya*).[14] The *Rāmāyaṇa* also uses the phrase, but with a noteworthy difference. Whereas the *Mahābhārata* usually uses it in disclosures about (and sometimes to) characters of the main story,[15] the *Rāmāyaṇa* has Rāma hear the phrase mostly from Ṛṣis who are telling him about how the work of the gods worked long ago.[16] The second term is "the secret of the gods": paradoxically,

12. Arjuna with Śiva and Indra (*Mbh* 3.38–45); Bhīma with Vāyu through meeting Hanumān, both being Vāyu's sons (3.147–50); Yudhiṣṭhira with Dharma (see chapter 9 § D). Bhīma gets hints about the divine plan from Hanumān at 3.150.5–9.

13. See Hiltebeitel 1984, 2 for this term, by which I meant to invoke iconic visual representations that can also be represented in ritualized drama.

14. We have seen it used with reference to Gaṅgā (1.92.49; see chapter 8 § C) and Draupadī (1.155.45; see chapter 10 § D). Hardly irrelevantly, *devakārya* also often means "worship," "what must be done for the gods" (Biardeau 1981*b*, 80; 2002, I: 221).

15. See *Mbh* 3.41.37: Indra commissions Arjuna to do "very great *devakārya*" by fighting the gods' enemies in heaven; 3.89.17: reporting Arjuna to have done this "great *surakārya*"; 3.164.16: the World Guardians tell Arjuna he has seen Śiva to accomplish their *surakārya*; 3.181.39: Mārkaṇḍeya tells Yudhiṣṭhira the Pāṇḍavas have come to earth from the world beyond for the sake of the *surakārya*; and most representatively, at 15.39.5–7 Vyāsa, preparing the blindfolded Gāndhārī to see her slain sons and others rise from the Gaṅgā, tells her "O faultless one, the *surakārya* could not but be accomplished. All these descended [*avaterur*] to the surface of the earth with their divine portions, Gandharvas, Apsarases, Piśācas, Guhya[ka]s, and Rākṣasas, as also even meritorious folk—Siddhas and Devarṣis, gods and Dānavas and taintless Brahmarṣis; they met death on the Kurukṣetra battlefield" (see Ganguli [1884–96] 1970, 12: 238). In an exception to such disclosures being made usually to human characters, Śiva tells Umā that, in being half his body, she "does the *surakārya* and undertakes the continuity of the worlds (*surakāryakarī ca tvaṃ lokasaṃtānakāriṇī*)" (13.134.9–10; cf. Ganguli 11: 315).

16. See *Rām* 1.63.11: Viśvāmitra tells Rāma how the gods got Agni to do their *surakārya* in contributing to the birth of Kārttikeya; 2.109.12: Atri tells Rāma how his wife Anasūyā once occasioned the *devakārya*, ending a drought by using her ascetic power to get the Gaṅgā to flow; 3.10.15: the Muni Dharmabhṛt tells Rāma why miraculous sounds come from a lake: five Apsarases interrupted another sage's *tapas* to accomplish the *kārya* of the gods (*surāṇām*); the sage then built an underwater house where they make love and beautiful music. Similarly, but without using these terms, Viśvāmitra tells Rāma that the digging up of the earth by Rāma's ancestors, the

a more obvious term, since, at least in the *Mahābhārata*, one meets it in discrete scenes where sagely narrators disclose the *Mahābhārata*'s godly subplot,[17] much to the distaste of certain scholars who share van Buitenen's view that these are "late" scenes of "inept mythification."[18] Yet we have also noticed the term cropping up half-knowingly in Yudhiṣṭhira's contretemps with Draupadī in *Mahābhārata* Book 3 (see chapter 10 § D). Here, I must regretfully disagree with Brodbeck's approach to the "secret of the gods" in an article that is favorable to the epic's short-term composition (2009*c*, 37–38 and n. 17). Although it is true that most of the *Mahābhārata*'s Kṣatriya women, whose grief over their slain husbands the article is about, are uninformed about the "secret of the gods" and are victims of its "Kṣatriya ideology" (47), it is overstated and an oversight to say, "The *MBh*'s central characters are ignorant" of that secret (see nn. 15 and 17 above). Brodbeck speaks of a "lower level" of human action that "remains primary" over a "higher level" (40) one, whose "cosmic interpretation of the war is used sparingly" (50). Dividing matters so that the lower level one is for epic characters and the higher level one "primarily to remind the audience" (39–40, cf. 51) is to overlook how the characters, often as audience themselves, are drawn into the same story, and how they are often only a step "behind" Janamejaya and other audiences in figuring things out (see chapter 9 on Yudhiṣṭhira and "The Yakṣa's Questions").[19] It is

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sons of Sagara, was something Brahmā reassured the gods about (1.38.23–39.4) since it was foreseen as prelude to the descent of the Gaṅgā. See, however, 6.105.26 where Brahmā, just after revealing Rāma and Sītā's divine identities, tells Rāma, "Thus have you accomplished our purpose (*tad idaṃ naḥ kṛtaṃ kāryaṃ tvayā*). . . . Rāvaṇa has been slain. Now, Rāma, in your delight, please return to heaven." Which does not happen yet (see Goldman and Sutherland Goldman 2009, 1,454), as Agni now returns Sītā to Rāma (106.1–9), and Śiva tells Rāma to wait until he has established his lineage in Ayodhyā (107.5–6).

17. Vyāsa to Drupada (1.189); Vyāsa to Dhṛtarāṣṭra (11.8.20–26 and 15.35.11–22); Vyāsa to Gāndhārī (15.39.5–16); Nārada musing to himself as reported by Vaiśaṃpāyana to Janamejaya (2.33.11–20); and Vaiśaṃpāyana directly to Janamejaya (1.61; 1.109.1–4; 18.5); in the latter case by a simple allusion (18.5) since Janamejaya has heard all these other iterations by that point at the end. Assembling most of these passages and discussing especially the latter, see Austin 2009, 601–3, 606–7, 610, 619–23. Mentioning most of these and others as well, including Duryodhana's learning of the secret of the Asuras (*Mbh* 3.240.103,0), see Brodbeck 2009*c*, 33–41.

18. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 164 n. 118 on van Buitenen's view (1973, xix–xx), shared by others including Bigger (1998, 100) and going back at least to Winternitz 1933–34, 174, that the story Vyāsa tells Drupada to justify Draupadī's polyandry is "silly" and "inept mythification." Cf. Malinar 2007*a*, 3, finding no "overarching framework" or "red thread" such as in the *Iliad*; E. Hudson 2006, 148–59, finding Vyāsa's explanation to Dhṛtarāṣṭra that he has lost his sons by a "divine design" to unburden the earth (11.8) less persuasive than consolations by Saṃjaya and Vidura. See also Austin 2009, 620–22, critiquing additionally, among others, Mangels 1994, 55–59, for positing "a one-time act of mythologization" of an originally bardic core.

19. Finding "depart[ure] in details" and "discrepancies" (2009*c*, 36) in the ways the divine secret (whose first disclosure, involving the unburdening of the earth, is misleadingly called "the frame story") is told in different situations, Brodbeck gives van Buitenen's "inept mythologization" a "whether . . . or not" free pass (37) and even what seems to be a final note of sympathy (54). Similarly, in his book on *Mahābhārata* genealogy, he writes "we see how cosmic stories might retrospectively arise" (2009*a*, 262).

really a strain to imagine Draupadī or Sītā, and others in their stories, not being intrigued by their miraculous births.[20] Again, the *Rāmāyaṇa* brings a different twist. Rather than the secret of the gods being an anterior story, the secret of the gods is Rāma himself. As Daśaratha's ghost says to Lakṣmaṇa, among other revelations of the divine plan once Rāvaṇa is slain: the gods say that Rāma is "Brahman, the unmanifest and imperishable Supreme Spirit, the secret heart of the gods (*devānāṃ hṛdayam . . . guhyam*)" (6.107.31; Goldman and Sutherland Goldman 2009, 465). Also, in the *Mahābhārata* only, both the "work of the gods" and the "secret of the gods" refer to what is called "Earth's business" and "the purification of the earth."[21]

3. These dispositive terms have allowed us to track other more ambiguous verbal cues found in both epics that can be read as referring to their divine plans. One, which I follow up in the next section, has been noted in derivatives of √*dhā* and *vi*-√*dhā* to indicate what is "ordained." Another is the use of *amānuṣa*, "inhuman," to describe Rāma's "inhuman manliness."[22] This is actually a rich vein of half-realized truths and cross-references among the themes so far mentioned, from which I cull just a few. The *Mahābhārata*'s *Parvasaṃgraha* says the epic will tell about Draupadī's "superhuman marriage as ordained by the gods" (*devavihito vivāhaś cāpy amānuṣaḥ*; *Mbh* 1.2.88). Ghaṭotkaca was "inhuman though born from a human" (*amānuṣaṃ mānuṣajaṃ*; 1.143.30). Draupadī in disguise hears that she will steal everyone's love with her "superhuman body (*vapus amānuṣam*)" (4.8.23). Dhṛtaraṣṭra tells Saṃjaya how he fears each Pāṇḍava: "Those Indras among men have cast out their superhuman net (*amānuṣaṃ manuṣyendrair jalaṃ vitatam*) in the middle of my army and will kill it off" (5.52.7).[23] Finally, having told Dhṛtarāṣṭra some of the divine secret as it bears on the god Dharma's double incarnation in Vidura and Yudhiṣṭhira, and leading up to his miracle of making the slain warriors, including the *blind* old king's sons, appear for one night rising out of the Gaṅgā, Vyāsa asks him, "What superhuman (*amānuṣam*) [feat] do you wish to obtain from me,

20. See chapter 10 § A, and n. 13 of that chapter for Brodbeck's handling of Draupadī's birth.

21. On "Earth's business" (*bhūmeḥ kṛtyam; Mbh* 1.58.41) and "the purification of the earth" (*bhuvaḥ śodhana*; 1.58.51), see chapter 6 § C at n. 52.

22. On Rāma's *vīryam amānuṣam*, see *Rām* 7.17.29 and chapter 10 § A, noting a *Mahābhārata* usage cited in chapter 9.

23. Note that Bigger's dismissal of the story of the five former Indras (the *Pañcendra-Upākhyāna*) on the grounds that "it stands isolated in the *Mahābhārata*," and that one "can take out these verses" (1998, 159, 161; cf. 100), does not stand up to such half-knowing references to the Pāṇḍavas.

> O king? *To see,* to touch, or to hear? Speak, I will do just that" (15.35.25). Meanwhile, in the *Rāmāyaṇa,* when Bharata tries to convince Rāma to return with him to Ayodhyā, he says, "Some say a king is mortal; I esteem him a god, whose conduct in matters of *dharma* and *artha* they say is inhuman (*yasya . . . vṛttam āhur amānuṣam*)" (*Rām* 2.95.4). I also flagged a third such verbal cue where Draupadī "descends" into the arena for her *svayaṃvara* (*Mbh* 1.176.9–30). This is one of numerous instances in both epics where derivatives of the prefixed verbal root *ava-√tṝ* hint at what lies ahead in the future Purāṇic development of the term *avatāra.*[24] The epics' avant la lettre unfolding of what is to become of this concept will be the topic of the third section of this chapter.

These are all matters one can build from, and, in proceeding further, we are fortunate to be able to draw on three scholars who, in the last decade, have shown that the dismissal of the *Mahābhārata*'s divine plan should not be so easy. Fernando Wulff's long chapter on "El Plan Divino" (2008, 81–146) serves to introduce all the other "connection points" that he believes the *Mahābhārata* poets reworked from a "Greek repertory."[25] I can sum up what is pertinent to our discussion in four points: (*a*) The "plan of Zeus," which is also a secret, is undertaken to bring about the unburdening of the earth after Zeus's agreement to do so with the earth goddess Gaia, and his deliberation with Themis, the "divine embodiment of the natural order," in whom Wulff sees a similarity to Dharma (111–12). (*b*) These stories on the background of the Trojan war are found in texts closest in time to the *Iliad,* most notably the *Cypria,* known through a digest by Proclus and some fragments, but also echoed in the *Odyssey* and Hesiod (110–14), that interpret the Trojan war as "the story of an announced annihilation not only of Troy but of an entire generation of heroes" (81). (*c*) That interpretation would be the window through which post-Alexander the Great Indian poets could have come to know the Greek epic. (*d*) Yet classical Greek scholarship in the last two centuries has renewed a resistance to this interpretation that goes back to Socrates, which is

24. See chapter 10 n. 23. As noted, Couture 2001 cites this passage in an article that traces all instances of the verbal root *ava-√tṝ* in the *Mahābhārata.* I too was tracking such usages in Hiltebeitel 2001*a,* 70 n. 135 (the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa "descending upon Kurukṣetra" to hear Bhīṣma [1.48.1–3]), 146 (Balarāma "descending from Plakṣa Prasravaṇa" to Kurukṣetra [9.53.33]), 232 (Nala as the dwarf Bāhuka and his nondriving charioteer Vārṣṇeya "descending the superb chariot" [3.71.18]), 295 (Vyāsa's four disciples "descending to earth" [12.315.7–8])—the last two of which Couture does not discuss. In Hiltebeitel 2004*a,* 224–26, not yet having found Couture's article, I discussed these and other passages while developing ideas about a "politics of *bhakti*" and "an *ava-√tṝ* convention" of using derivative forms avant la lettre of actual usages of the term *avatāra.* One can now benefit greatly from Couture's advancement of the discussion around the idea of theatrical usages.

25. Wulff's book is being translated into English, and I thank him for letting me read drafts of chapters 1 and 2, from which the following quotes are taken. Cf. chapter 7 § A.4 on Wulff's treatments of the *yugas* and the Greek ages, and of Bhīṣma and Achilles as mourned-for sons of water goddesses.

"to deny mythology" ("negar la mitologia," 109). Clearly the last two centuries of classical scholarship on Homer has, on these matters, been echoed in *Mahābhārata* scholarship like that of van Buitenen. Wulff's main thesis on the *Mahābhārata*'s genesis has the attraction of offering a solution to the question raised by epic as a new Indian genre (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 5–7; 2005*a*, 87 and n. 18).

The other two contributions are those of André Couture (2001), who discusses theatrical overtones of the root *ava-√tṝ*, and Christopher Austin (2009), who builds on Couture's point to reinforce the profundity of "Janamejaya's Last Question" as to what happened to the *Mahābhārata*'s supernaturally incarnated heroes and heroines once they came to "the end of their karma" in heaven. I am persuaded by major conclusions of both articles. Couture is convincing that a classical theatrical usage of derivatives of *ava-√tṝ* yields "a precise technical term used to describe that movement performed by actors who move from the stage wings onto the stage itself" (2001, 319, 324 n. 8), and that this theatrical usage is pertinent to many usages in the *Mahābhārata* and *Harivaṃśa* that make the world a stage for the play of the gods. As we shall see, the same applies to the Rāma story in both the *Rāmopākhyāna* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. And Austin is persuasive about the value of what the *Mahābhārata* Critical Edition has Vaiśaṃpāyana ever-so-briefly say in response to Janamejaya's last question. Contrary to Nīlakaṇṭha's forced reading (and redaction) of Vaiśaṃpāyana's answer to Janamejaya, in which Nīlakaṇṭha goes to great lengths to argue, in accord with his own contemporary understanding of karma,[26] that *some* of those who had supernatural incarnations would have had subsequent karmic destinies and others would not have, Vaiśaṃpāyana's important real answer is that everyone dissolved back into their supernatural natures. As Austin astutely sees, the implication is that they were *not* "'*like us*.'. . . Rather, their post-death fate is unique to them, and it takes place without further reference to worldly births, saṃsāric existence, or *mokṣa*" (2009, 619; my italics). This insight allows us to deduce that this ending of the *Mahābhārata* tells us the precise end of its divine plan. As far as the *Mahābhārata* is concerned, these heroes and heroines will not reincarnate,[27] nor is there any question of their achieving

26. As Austin points out (2009, 13), the *Mahābhārata* does not know the later Vedāntic distinction between *prārabdha karmas*, actions whose residues "have determined the present life form and actively ripen (*vipāka*) in the present lifetime; their exhaustion is simultaneous with the termination of that lifespan," and two other types of karma that carry karmic residues along from past to future lifetimes—a typology that would have inspired Nīlakaṇṭha to introduce his distinction between heroes ready for liberation and others who are not.

27. This is a fascinating matter, on which Indian martial oral folk epics generated counteropinions in the medieval period well before Nīlakaṇṭha's seventeenth-century times, and it is indeed worth considering that Nīlakaṇṭha may have been motivated to make this argument not only as a Vedāntin but as one who could have been familiar with the Hindi oral epic *Ālhā*, popular and well rooted at least today in the Vārāṇasī area where Nīlakaṇṭha lived, in which Draupadī and many male heroes are reincarnated in this "*Mahābhārata* of the Kali yuga" to carry out their "unfinished business" from the *Mahābhārata* (see chapter 7 § A.1; Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, 121–296).

mokṣa.[28] Kṛṣṇa's miraculous postwar revival of the stillborn Parikṣit, the grandson of Arjuna and son of Abhimanyu who incarnated the Moon's splendor, was of course part of the divine plan through which Parikṣit could revive the lunar dynasty in the setting-in of the Kaliyuga.[29] But Parikṣit himself incarnated no one, and neither did his son Janamejaya, who got to live in "real Kali *yuga* time" like us. Rather than living in and as part of a divine plan, he, like us, only gets to hear and ask about a divine fait accompli.

Of course one cannot expect the *Mahābhārata* to give us total closure on its divine plan. No doubt it has other as yet unplotted moves, one of which was to number the "*Harivaṃśa Purāṇa* called an Appendix (*khila*)" and the "*Bhaviṣyat* ('Future') called a great wonder among the Appendices (*khileṣu*)" as the ninety-ninth and last of its hundred *upaparvans* or major units in the *Parvasaṃgraha* (*Mbh* 1.2.69). Couture addresses what the *Mahābhārata* might mean by an "appendix" with "appendices," noting that "the Indian tradition would rather consider the HV as a set of addenda completing the MBh," and that "the HV must be considered globally to be a set of *khilas* to the MBh, i.e., as supplements necessary to a full understanding of the MBh" (1996, 132, 135). Although the *Harivaṃśa* actually contains three *parvans* rather than two, the two that the *Mahābhārata* refers to as *upaparvan*s may be meant to encompass all three (Brodbeck 2010*e*). In any case, they would "append" further information about the divine plan that would refocus what has been said so far.

As Couture says, "The HV presents Viṣṇu's incarnation as Kṛṣṇa with more precise wording, using the same [*ava-√tṝ*] vocabulary but adding some very important paraphrases" (2001, 315). Among these, we learn that Viṣṇu receives the news that Earth is not only being trampled but urbanized[30] when he rises from his cosmic sleep, "just as the Dvāpara yuga is coming to a close." The gods "ask Brahmā to tell them what each of them should do (*yat . . . kāryam*)"[31] to relieve Earth's pain. For their *aṃśāvataraṇa* or "descent in portions," they say, "Let us also create bodies without passing though an uterus (*ayonijāś cāpi tanūḥ sṛjāma*)." Brahmā tells them they will form opposite factions and fight against one another. Nārada prods Viṣṇu to first dispose of Kaṃsa at Mathurā; and so on, focusing in on

28. This renders rather moot any notion that Kṛṣṇa might be promising Arjuna actual release from *saṃsāra* at *BhG* 18.66 at the far side of the *Gītā*'s third ring of *dharma* (see chapter 11 § D). Cf. de Bruin 1998 on the Tamil *Mahābhārata* folk theater's understanding of Karṇa's "mokṣa" as his death.

29. On this episode (*Mahābhārata* 14.65–69.11, especially 68.18–24), its lunar symbolism and narrative ramifications, see Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 337–38, 349–50; 2001*a*, 75–76.

30. The mention of cities burdening the earth is specific only in the *Harivaṃśa*; cf. Couture 2006, 75 on "violent cities" in contrast to "the pastoral ambiance of Vedic lore" that he finds behind the image of the *dharma* bull.

31. Note that Couture highlights the usage of *kāryam* at *HV* 43.3. Cf. 43.11: "Having this great resolution of the gods assembled for one common cause (*surāṇām ekakāryāṇām*), the grandfather of all, eulogized by the celestials, said to them" (Dutt 1897, 229). See also *HV* 13.69 (*devakāryād*); 62.17 (*devānāṃ . . . kāryam avyayam*); 65.44 (*kāryaṃ surāṇām*); 81.2 (*kāryartho devatānām*); 87.41 (*devatākārye)*; 93.6 (*surakāryeṣu sarveṣu*).

Kṛṣṇa's parents and wives (Couture 2001, 315–16, summarizing *HV* 43.6–45.80). We would not have known from the *Mahābhārata* that Earth's plight included cities, or that Viṣṇu awakened to it just before the Dvāpara *yuga*.[32] Nor had we heard about the gods' determination to have *ayonija* bodies. We did see (in chapter 8 § C) that when the Vasus were cursed to born in a womb, they got Gaṅgā to be their mother so they would not have to enter "an inauspicious human-female womb" (*na mānuṣīṇāṃ jaṭharaṃ . . . aśubham*; *Mbh* 1.91.14cd). This could be in the *Harivaṃśa*'s time frame of the near end of the Dvāpara *yuga*, so it is probably what the *Harivaṃśa* has in mind. Yet the only *Mahābhārata* characters among those who take part in the *aṃśāvataraṇa* to be explicitly *ayonija* are Draupadī (1.153.8) and the pot-born Droṇa (1.61.63). While her brother Dhṛṣṭadyumna's birth from fire would qualify him as well, most other key figures seem to take birth from human mothers. This is explicitly so for Duryodhana, who "was a piece of Kali (*kaler aṃśaḥ*) born in Gāndhārī's belly (*jaṭhare*) to effect the destruction of the worlds" (11.8.27cd; Fitzgerald trans. 2004*a*, 41). And Vidura was born in the womb of a Śūdra (*śūdrayonau*; 1.101.25c, 27d) because Dharma was cursed by Aṇīmāṇḍavya. Interestingly, whereas Yudhiṣṭhira is a "portion" (*aṃśa*) of Dharma (1.61.84), this is not, as far as I can see, said of Vidura, so Dharma presumably becomes "fully" Vidura,[33] while in his all-pervading aspect (15.35.19–20) he is also able to subsequently sire Yudhiṣṭhira and have his three paternal moments to test him as a Yakṣa, dog, and afterworld psychopomp—all of which reinforces the way *dharma* is so especially and distinctly imbricated in the *Mahābhārata*'s divine plan.

But most informatively, the *Bhaviṣya Parvan* (*HV* 114–18) ends the Pune Critical edition of the *Harivaṃśa*, which completed the Pune Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata*. As was mentioned in chapter 7 (§ A.1), the *Yuga Purāṇa* rounds off its prophetic twelve-verse digest of *Mahābhārata* events leading into the Kali *yuga* with an allusion to a *Bhaviṣya Parvan* episode we shall soon now be discussing. But shortly before that episode itself, the *Bhaviṣya Parvan* gives Janamejaya an opportunity to ask more last questions, and the last one he asks that reflects on the secret of the gods (without calling it that) is nearly as interesting as his last question in *Mahābhārata* Book 18. It now too plumbs not only the *Mahābhārata*, but the depths of the combined *Mahābhārata-Harivaṃśa* that he has now just heard almost to the end.

A taut and tightly packed unit, the *Bhaviṣya Parvan* begins with Śaunaka asking some questions of Sauti (the bard) about the sons Janamejaya had with his

32. Though Kṛṣṇa does something transparently similar at the beginning of the *Udyogaparvan*, waking up at Dvārakā to see that Duryodhana and Arjuna have come to his bedside seeking his favor in the upcoming war (see Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 103–7).

33. One repeated phrase is *dharmo vidurarūpeṇa*, "Dharma in the form of Vidura" (1.100.28; 101.27). Cf. 15.35.12: *dharmo viduratāṃ gataḥ*, "Dharma attained the state or condition of being Vidura" (see MW 963).

wife, initially just called Kāśyā (114.2), who will reappear shortly with a fuller name. He thus learns about descendants of Janamejaya through two generations down to a foundling named "Goat-Sides" (Ajapārśva), who is called "the founder of the Pāṇḍava *vaṃśa*" (114.16). Then, after Śaunaka congratulates Sauti on how much hearing the "entire *Harivaṃśa* pleases us" (*HV* 115.1–2), Sauti tells him what Janamejaya did next. Having finished his snake sacrifice in Takṣaśilā, he started to collect materials for a horse sacrifice, which would be completed in Hāstinapura. Still, however, in Takṣaśilā, Janamejaya summoned his priests and ordered them to release the horse (115.4–6). Learning about it, Vyāsa, "the foremost of the omniscient (*sarvaparāvarajñaḥ*), came suddenly (*sahasājagāma*) to see" (7). Janamejaya received him with customary rites of hospitality, and when both had joined the seated attendees they engaged in "diverse and variegated stories that were connected with Veda (*kathā bahuvidhāś citrāś cakrate vedasaṃhitāḥ*)." And "at the end of a story (*kathānte*)," Janamejaya addressed Vyāsa, "the Muni who was the Pāṇḍavas' grandfather and his own fore-grandfather (*prapitāmahaḥ*; actually his great great grandfather)" (8–10). There is a medley here of *Mahābhārata* echoes. As elsewhere, the epic mentions variegated stories on Vedic themes exchanged at Naimṣa Forest occasions (Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 99–100, 123). As in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, there is a "dip" from the outer frame dialogue between Śaunaka and Sauti through the inner frame one between Janamejaya and Vaiśaṃpāyana to the ultimate authority of Vyāsa (Hiltebeitel 2006*a*; 2011*a*, chapter 7), who sits here recalling what I have called the outermost frame in which he first told the *Mahābhārata* to Vaiśaṃpāyana and four other disciples before Vaiśaṃpayana narrated it to Janamejaya (2001*a*, 92; 2011*a*, chapter 7). Vyāsa was a *sadasya* or seated attendee during the recitation of the *Mahābhārata* at Janamejaya's snake sacrifice, and has now returned as an attendee at the launching of Janamejaya's horse sacrifice, which has apparently begun with the release of the horse. He has come suddenly and will stay only briefly, taking leave after foretelling some matters of the near and distant future.

Once Vyāsa had been welcomed, then, Janamejaya said,

> The *Mahābhārata* narrative has many meanings and great extent;
> by being agreeable to hear, it is like it has gone by for me in a
> moment (*mahābhāratam ākhyānaṃ bahvarthaṃ bahuvistaram/*
> *nimeṣamātram iva me sukhaśravyatayā gatam*. (*HV* 115.11)

Another nice *Mahābhārata* touch here: in quoting Janamejaya's fleeting description of the *Mahābhārata* going by in a moment, twinkle, or blink (*nimeṣa*) to Śaunaka among the heavenly Ṛsis of the Naimiṣa (Twinkling) Forest, Sauti is collapsing the inner and outer frames while Janamejaya is collapsing the *Harivaṃśa* into the *Mahābhārata*. Yet Janamejaya, having lauded the author in

this fashion, says he still is like a man dissatisfied with nectar or heaven, and does not find satisfaction (*tṛptim*) in the *Mahābhārata* story (13). Before getting to the main question he has in mind, he asks the "omniscient" Vyāsa whether Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya was the cause of the destruction of the Kurus (13–14).[34] As A. Harindranath (2010) puts it, "Janamejaya . . . correctly deduces that Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya was the root cause." Harindranath's study expands from the moment in the *Mahābhārata* on the day of Yudhiṣṭhira's royal consecration, just before Kṛṣṇa's killing of Śiśupāla, when "Nārada watches the vast assemblage of kings and recalls a tale he had heard long ago in the dwelling of Brahmā at the time of the *aṃśāvataraṇam*, [and] it begins to dawn on him that this human assembly was in fact an assembly of gods" all doomed to destruction (*Mbh* 2.33.11–20; cf. Couture 2001, 321). Janamejaya recalls this, and having also "listened carefully to the entire (disastrous) history of his great grandfathers, having learned about the Rājasūyas of Varuṇa and Soma and the accompanying great wars," he "now confronts Vyāsa" (Harindranath 2010):

> You are even the grandfather of our ancestors, knowledgeable of past and future, and our first lord. How, with you as their guide, did those intelligent ones, as if having none to govern them, and deviating from the paths of morality, commit sin?[35]

Vyāsa replies:

> Being seized by time, child, your grandfathers did not ask me about the future. And unasked, I did not speak. Besides, I see the announcement of the future as unsuitable; I am surely not able to counteract a course that is conditioned by time.[36]

Vyāsa then characteristically takes what he wants from this exchange to direct Janamejaya's interest to two futures he *will* now tell *him* about (once he puts the questions into Janamejaya's head). One is the future of the Kali *yuga*, in which Janamejaya recognizes himself to be now living (*HV* 116.2). As we have noted in chapter 7, bits of this future history that Vyāsa foresees were helpful to us in contextualizing some of the historical allusions in the *Yuga Purāṇa*. The other concerns the near-future outcome of Janamejaya's horse sacrifice, which Vyāsa tells Janamejaya he will be unable to counteract (115.26). In describing the Kali

34. It would seem that Janamejaya has set his mind on an Aśvamedha mindful of the dangers of a Rājāsūya. Cf. Lakṣmaṇa's similar advice to Rāma on this comparative topic (*Rām* 7.75).

35. *HV* 115.22–23: *bhavān api ca sarveṣāṃ pūrveṣāṃ naḥ pitāmahaḥ/ atītānāgatajñaś ca nāthaś cādikaraś ca naḥ// te kathaṃ bhagavan netrā buddhimantaś cyutā nayāt/ anātha hy aparādhyante kunetaraś ca mānavāḥ* (Dutt trans. 1897, 820, modified).

36. *HV* 115.24–25: *kālenādya parītās te tava vatsa pitāmahāḥ/ na māṃ bhaviṣyaṃ papracchur na cāpṛṣṭo bravīmy aham// niḥsāmarthyaṃ ca paśyāmi bhaviṣyasya nivedanam/ parihartuṃ na śaksyāmi kālaniṣṭhāṃ hi tām gatiṃ.*

yuga over most of two *adhyāyas*, Vyāsa centers his two prophesies on a point where they converge. The outcome of Janemejaya's Aśvamedha will affect future Aśvamedhas in the Kali *yuga*—a matter we must return to shortly. After saying all this, Vyāsa then coyly takes leave with the words, "We will see (each other?) again" (*punar drakṣyāma ity uktvā*; *HV* 1.118.5). Once Vyāsa leaves, kings and Ṛṣis, including Āstīka (7), then depart after him. Āstīka's departure makes it clear they are leaving Takṣaśilā, where Āstīka interceded at Janamejaya's snake sacrifice to rescue the snakes. In the next verse, having cast off his wrath (*roṣam utsṛjya*) at the dreadful snakes, Janamejaya goes back to Hāstinapura and rules well (8), whereupon, "a short time later (*kasyacit atha kālasya*)," he was "conscrated for the horse sacrifice (*dīkṣito vājimedhāya*)" (11). The horse, it seems, would in the meantime have returned to Hāstinapura, the Kuru capital.

This brings us now to the *Bhaviṣya Parvan* episode that—in the Pune Critical Edition—closes both the *Harivaṃśa* and, in one of its most capacious self-definitions, the *Mahābhārata*. The spotlight turns immediately to one scene, and the main event all happens rather quickly:

> When that one's horse was suffocated there (*saṃjñaptam aśvaṃ tatrāsya*), the queen Kāśyā Vapuṣṭamā, having approached, then lay down according to the rite prescribed by rule (*saṃviveśopagamyātha vidhidṛṣṭena karmaṇā*). But Vāsava then desired (*cakame*) that lady of faultless limbs. Having possessed the suffocated horse (*saṃjñaptam aśvam āviśya*),[37] he became mingled with her (*tayā miśrībabhūva saḥ*). When that transformation (*vikāra*) occurred, he [Janamejaya], having come to know the truth about it, said to the Adhvaryu, "This horse of yours is unsuffocated. Perish![38] The Adhvaryu, knowledgable as to Indra's conduct, told the royal sage and cursed Puraṃdara." (*HV* 118.12–15)

We do not learn what the Adhvaryu's curse of Indra entailed, since Sauti focuses only on Janamejaya's reaction, which shows that when he described this king's "casting off his wrath" at the end of his snake sacrifice, it was premature. Uttering an act of truth based on the merits gained from his sacrifices, penances, and protection of his people, Janamejaya says, "Hear this (*śrūyatām idam*). From this day on, Kṣatriyas will no longer offer the Aśvamedha sacrifice to the unstable Indra, who has not conquered his senses" (16–17). Tapping then more deeply into his anger, he faults the Adhvaryu for allowing

37. Cf. *HV* 118.34: *aiśvaryeṇāśvam āviśya*, "by his lordly power he possessed the horse." Cf. chapter 8 § G on the dead King Vyuṣitāśva's possession of the horse that impregnates his widow, in a story told by Kuntī.

38. Or "fall," for *dhvaṃsa* (*HV* 118.14d). For similar uses, see *Mbh* 3.178.37d; 5.17.15a, both addressed to the Pāṇḍavas ancestor Nahuṣa who will perish and fall into becoming as a snake. Janamejaya is addressing the Adhvaryu, not the horse (Dutt 1897, 831 has "Kill him at once!").

the spoiling of the sacrifice, and tells all the priests (*ṛtvijas*) to leave his territory. And getting still angrier, he goes to his women's quarters and tells his other wives to drive away the unchaste (*asatīm*) Vapuṣṭamā (18–22).

The Gandharva Viśvāvasu—a curious incercessor who perhaps knows more than most about horses and, in any case, about heavenly nymphs or Apsarases[39]—then calms Janamejaya down by telling him what was really behind all this. The Aśvamedha was Janamejaya's three-hundredth sacrifice, and Indra, thinking that Janamejaya could surpass him, sought a loophole and put this obstacle in the way. Moreover, Vapuṣṭamā was formerly the Apsaras Rambhā in a previous life, and Indra took pleasure only with her, not with Vapuṣṭamā! Less implausibly[40] but perhaps more reassuringly, Viśvāvasu adds that since Indra has great splendor and is desirous of victory, he would not violate the wives of a descendant (Janamejaya is a lineal descendant of Indra's son Arjuna). In any case, consoling Janamejaya, as Vyāsa had earlier, that destiny is hard to withstand, he tells him he should not blame Indra, his guru, Vapuṣṭamā, or himself; Vapuṣṭamā is sinless (*apāpām*) and should be honored, and Janamejaya should continue to enjoy her as the jewel among women that she is (*HV* 118.24–38). From here, before the *Bhaviṣya Parvan* ends with a brief *phalaśruti* and a final verse inviting further questions,[41] Sauti says that Janamejaya got his mind off his anxieties by performing a supreme pacification rite that was devoted to *dharma* (*śāntiṃ parām . . . dharmajuṣṭam*; 39), and that with his mind on *dharma* and directed at pleasing Vapuṣṭamā, he did not stop honoring Brahmins; did not stop frequently performing sacrifices[42] or looking after his realm; and did not scold (*na parigarhati*) Vapuṣṭamā (39–41). But no more horse sacrifices.

Janamejaya has thus pronounced the discontinuation of the Aśvamedha by Kṣatriyas. Yet his pronouncement would have behind it what Vyāsa told him about this very matter during his brief prophetic visit. Indeed, Vyāsa foresaw precisely this, and communicated it partially to Janamejaya, virtually putting the idea of the ban into his head. Vyāsa had begun, "It is known that the Aśvamedha is the best sacrifice for Kṣatriyas. That being its nature, Vāsava will treat your sacrifice with indignity" (*tena bhāvena te yajñaṃ vāsavo dharṣayiṣyati*)" (*HV* 115.28). Vyāsa warned Janamejaya that even if he could withstand fate by manliness, he should not perform the rite; nonetheless, neither Indra "nor your

39. On Viśvāvasu as possibly the original single Ṛgvedic Gandharva from whom the class of them derives, and on their possibly old connections with horses and continuing ones with Apsarases, see Oberlies 2009.

40. When we were told just before this that Indra desired that lady of faultless limbs (*HV* 118.13), it was with reference only to Vapuṣṭamā. There was no mention of Rambhā.

41. Sauti asks Śaunaka, "What else do you want? What do I tell you?" (*kim aparam icchasi kiṃ bravīmi te*; *HV* 118.51).

42. Given that Janamejaya will go on performing other sacrifices in the Kali *yuga*, it would not have been just the number of sacrifices that incited Indra, but the three-hundredth being an Aśvamedha.

sacrificing priest"[43] will commit sin (29–32). Janamejaya asks what the sign or occasion (*nimittam*) will be that his Aśvamedha is going off track, and says he can call it off (33). Vyāsa replies that the occasion will be what Janamejaya does to a Brahmin out of anger; he would do well to avoid it. But if Janamejaya holds this Aśvamedha, Kṣatriyas will not offer it as long as the earth shall last (34–35). This is a rather emphatic point, and brings out that the horse sacrifice stands paramount among animal sacrifices, which come under critique in the *Mahābhārata*, notably in the *Nārāyaṇīya*'s story of King Vasu Uparicara (*Mbh* 12.322–24), and further along when Yudhiṣṭhira's postwar Aśvamedha is exposed to have been worth little (see chapter 9 § D.2.a). Indeed, Yudhiṣṭhira's Aśvamedha now stands out as both the last one completed by a Kṣatriya and the last one done before the onset of the Kali *yuga*,[44] in which Janamejaya failed to replicate it. Realizing that his fiery curse of a Brahmin will end his Aśvamedha and that he will be the occasion, Janamejaya is deeply fearful and asks how one like himself, devoted to good deeds, can strive for higher worlds if he is like a bird in a noose striving to reach the sky. He asks Vyāsa to console him that there will be "a renewal of the sacrifice (*yajñasya punarāvṛtti*)" (*HV* 115. 36–38). Vyāsa begins his reply by predicting something obscurely technical about the mysteries of transmission: "A received sacrifice (*upāttayajño*) will remain among gods and Brahmins—an energy handed over by an energy, it will abide in just an energy (*tejasābhyāhṛtaṃ tejas tejasyevāvatiṣṭhate*)" (39). But he then predicts something quite concrete: "Springing forth, there will be a certain army-leader (*senānī*), a Kāśyapa Brahmin who will again restore the Aśvamedha in the Kali *yuga*" (40), and one of his successors "like a white planet" will offer a disastrous Rājasūya (41). It is not clear what the following verse describes, but Vyāsa seems to be referring to the horse: "In accord with its strength, it will bestow fruits on men performing it, and it will range about surrounded by Great Ṛṣis at the gate of the end of the *yuga*" (42). Vyāsa then concludes on another obscure note that is intelligible, however minimally, for linking the Kali *yuga* with its conventional *yugadharma* of giving, *dāna*, which here as elsewhere probably denotes *bhakti* religiosity: "Then a subtle *dharma* of great consequence, invincible, lax about the four life-stages, will advance. Then men will attain perfection with small austerity; fortunate indeed, they will do *dharma* at the *yuga*'s end, O Janamejaya."[45]

43. I am uncertain here. *Tava yajamānasya*, "of your *yajamāna*," seems to imply someone other than Janamejaya, who would presumably be his own sacrifice's *yajamāna* or patron. Dutt 1997, 821 has "presiding priests."

44. See Koskikallio 1994, 264, 267, indicating that these points emerge also from the *Jaiminibhārata*—a much later text "that most probably dates from between AD 1050 and 1250" (Koskikallio 1999, 227 n. 1).

45. *HV* 115.44–45: *tadā sūkṣmo mahodarko dustaro dānamūlavān/ cāturāśramyaśithalo dharmaḥ pravicaliṣyati// tadā hy alpena tapasā siddhiṃ yāsyanti mānavāḥ/ dhanyā dharmaṃ cariṣyanti yugāmte janamejaya*. On the yet to be fully explored relationship between *dāna* and *bhakti* in the Kali *yuga*, see Koskikallio 1994, 254–55, 265–66; von Steitencron 2005, 39–47.

If we now return to the problem of dating this *Bhaviṣya Parvan* prophesy through the *Yuga Purāṇa*'s reference to it in rounding off its equally prophetic *Mahābhārata-Harivaṃśa* digest, we cannot ignore the explanations many would likely give for these passages. The *Yuga Purāṇa*'s allusioins to the *Harivaṃśa* could be free floating oral folklore not yet attached to a composed *Harivaṃśa* text. Or the *Yuga Purāṇa* verse or verses that allude to *Harivaṃśa* material could be interpolated. Or the *Yuga Purāṇa* would have to be much later than has been thought. But the *Yuga Purāṇa*'s dating is reasonable and has looked sound to all who have examined it. As to the first two two arguments, they might be plausible for references to Dantavaktra and Śatadhanvan in *YP* 34–35 (see chapter 7 § A.1). But they would clearly look contrived were they applied to the artful way verse 39 references the story of Janamejaya's Aśvamedha and Vapuṣṭamā.[46] It is beginning to look like we must consider the *Harivaṃśa* as something not as far removed in time from the *Mahābhārata* as has been for a long time thought,[47] and as part of the *Mahābhārata* project *and* plan from at least the time it was reaching completion. Moreover, as R. Tsuchida (2009) demonstrated in a presentation at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference in Kyoto, it is quite plausible that Vyāsa's prophesy about an army-leader or general who becomes an Aśvamedha-performing Brahmin would refer to Puṣyamitra Śuṅga,[48] who, after overthrowing the Mauryan dynasty as a Brahmin general in about 185 BCE, is known for renewing the Aśvamedha by perfoming it twice (Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 16; Falk 2006*a*, 149). That Vyāsa should prophesy these events as coinciding with the emergence of a "subtle *dharma*" of *bhakti* would then involve a mapping of *dharma* and *bhakti* temporally down to the very historical period and social milieu in which we have argued that the Kali *yuga* concept took hold.

This brings us to our own rounding-off question for this section, which is how mapping divine plans will tie in with mapping friendship, hospitality, and separation. Friendship takes us to the kinds of intimacies the epics allow their readers to have with gods who once walked the earth humanly for the "welfare

46. Mitchiner (1986, 51 and n. 98) cites *Arthaśāstra* 1.6.6 as referring to Janamejaya's perishing after a "quarrel with the Brahmans," but the verse also mentions his violence against them and makes no reference to the setting, or to Janameyaya's wife. It is thus not the same story, and in any case is mentioned along with a series of incidents from both epics (Kangle [1972] 2003, 12). But as Brodbeck mentions, the *Mahābhārata* knows Vapuṣṭamā as Janamejaya's attractive (her name means "Most Beautiful") wife, and also several Janamejayas (2009*a*, 27, 234–48). It could thus allude to this *Harivaṃśa* story.

47. For considerations pointing in that direction, see importantly Bhattacharyya 1956, 155–56, 161; Couture 1996, 135–36 and n. 29; 2001; Mahadevan 2010; Brodbeck 2010*d*.

48. Tsuchida takes up Puṣyamitra's gotra in his article, "Some Reflections on the Chronological Problems of the *Mahābhārata*," *Studies in Indian Philosophy and Buddhism* 16 (2009): 1–24, which I did not find until too late to discuss it in this work. S. Bhattacharyya 1956, 160 says the Northern Vulgate variant *audbhijja*, which describes this horse sacrifice's reviver, could be cryptically applied to the Śuṅgas, both meaning "sprout." The Critical Edition favors a Southern reading *audbhido* (115.40a), which could imply the same.

of the world." With hospitality, we can anticipate, in Paul Younger's terms, that the *bhakti* idiom of "playing host to deity" would apply not only to temples and festivals where deities are both guests and hosts at once (2002, 13–14) but to texts. Into these texts, as we can now say, the supernatural "descended," and as its "portions" leave, their departures can be experienced in what becomes the *bhakti* idiom of love in separation (*viraha*). Mapping *bhakti* and *dharma* in the Sanskrit epics thus calls for a three-dimensional map that can plot vertical and horizontal movements, temporo-spatial coordinates, and textual and geographical terrains.

I will begin with two topics that follow from earlier chapters, but require fuller discussion. First, we need a fuller picture of the ways the two epics, and especially the *Mahābhārata*, invoke the deities Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ where uncertainties arise about the relation between *dharma* and the divine plan. This will lead us into a discussion of the notion that Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are incarnations of Viṣṇu, and, with it, the *Mahābhārata*'s treatment of other such incarnations and their appearances in time. Finally, mapping the interrelated practices or discourses of friendship, hospitality, and separation will take us into the "middle land" of what *dharma* and *bhakti* are about in both epics: the *dharma* of the Ṛṣis.

B. The Placer and the Ordainer

Even though *Manu* resists the *Mahābhārata*'s *bhakti* swerve and the *Rāmāyaṇa* streamlines it, they all agree that rules (*vidhi*) are divinely ordained, and that a conventional way of saying this is to draw on the etymological link between *vidhi*, "rules," especially, but not only, Vedic injunctions drawn from sacrificial rules,[49] and the two ancient Ṛgvedic abstract divinities named Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ, the Placer and the Ordainer.[50] These two deities are singularly pertinent to the project of mapping *bhakti* together with *dharma*, for they can be signposts of the workings of *dharma* over time—especially at moments where there may be questions raised and sometimes answered about a text's divine plan. For instance, we have seen in chapter 8 that they are introduced into the *Mahābhārata* as the female personifications of the weave of Days and Nights. And as we observed in chapter 11, Draupadī and Yudhiṣṭhira's dialogue early in their forest exile figures Dhātṛ

49. Bailey 1983, 142–43 and n. 20 notes that this "older view of vidhi as an ordinance which determines the procedure of a rite" has numerous *Mahābhārata* usages "in the phrase *vidhidṛṣṭena karmaṇā*, '[performed] with a rite existing in the rules.'"

50. As Brereton's translation of *ṚV* 10.167.3 suggests, the names imply an opposition: Dhātṛ as "one who sets in place" and Vidhātṛ as "one who sets apart" (see chapter 3 § B). Translators of classical texts, however, have favored such renderings as the Placer (or Creator) for Dhātṛ and the Disposer (or Ordainer) for Vidhātṛ. I will continue to call them the Placer and Ordainer.

and Vidhātṛ as abstract deities through whom Draupadī questions the effectiveness of *dharma* in the world, while both seem to be speaking about more familiar deities under these two names to either denounce or extol them. And when Yudhiṣṭhira refers to Draupadī's birth as among the mysteries of the gods that is yet to take fruit, he intimates that the Placer and Ordainer are behind a divine plan. The pair Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ are, however, abstractions for what would lie before the divine plan chronologically, yet figures who can be named when characters allude to its effects upon them and express their views about other forces that are at work, like karma and fate, in producing what seems their sorry plight. The Placer and Ordainer's contributions are generally achronological. In speaking at this abstract level, both Draupadī, Yudhiṣṭhira, as well as other characters, typically stay away from any reference to more concrete manifestations of divinity with whom they are familiar, for instance, Kṛṣṇa himself. Let us look at Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ more closely.

While these two deities often have what seems to be overlapping spheres of governance, it is possible even in *Manu*'s three references to them to see some latent distinctions. While Dhātṛ makes rules (*vidhis*) on meat in sacrifice (*M* 5.30–31) and determines that Ārya and non-Ārya are neither equal nor non-equal (10.73), Brahmins *are* Vidhātṛ (11.35) for their power to regulate the *varṇas*. Indeed, in the *Mahābhārata*, one of Bhīṣma's postwar teachings on *dharma* for times of distress (*āpaddharma*)—with no other mention of either Dhātṛ or Vidhātṛ in the *Āpaddharmaparvan*—is that Brahmins are Vidhātṛ specifically for just such times (12.159.18). As with mixed classes, it is as if nothing was "ordained," much less "set in place," for times of distress (*āpad*) other than that Brahmins are to decide what to do about them. The word *vidhi* as "rule" is everywhere in *Manu*. For instance, the last word on the king is that he has "eternal rules of action (*karmavidhir . . . sanātanaḥ*)" (*M* 9.325). *Manu* is consonant here with the Mīmāṃsā school's philosophy of "reflection" (*mīmāṃsā*) on Vedic ritual, which maintains that "*vidhis* properly interpreted are the main source of *dharma*. . . . [and that since] *dharma* can only be acquired by following the injunctions of the Vedas they should all be interpreted as giving us injunctions."[51]

As Greg Bailey has shown, both epics have put such a nexus of rules in play; he takes them to be similar in doing so. While relating Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ primarily to Brahmā in both epics, Bailey does not differentiate the two deities, and stresses Vidhātṛ for his etymological link with *vidhi* (1983, 141–42). As he indicates, in the epics *vidhi*, "rule," can also be a word for fate equivalent to *daiva* as well as a name for Brahmā. Although such a *dharma* nexus comes into being

51. See Bailey 1983, 152, who is quoting Dasgupta [1922] 1975, 5: 1183–84 here. See also Bailey 1983, 141–43.

with the Veda, it is not exactly created, and is not to be confused with the personified god Dharma whose early cosmogonic birth the *Mahābhārata* accounts for genealogically (see chapter 6 § A.3). As Bailey observes, the epics and Purāṇas say relatively little about the creation of *dharma* or its equivalent here, the Veda, in their primary and secondary cosmogonies (*dharma* is, after all, by their understanding "eternal"). But a creation, or better recreation or "reissuing," of *dharma* does occur in so far as Brahmā (or his sometimes surrogates Vidhātṛ and Dhātṛ) fits the eternal *dharma*'s supposedly Vedic *vidhis* to activities (*karma*) that should regulate the "spatio-temporal world of *dharma* and *adharma*," that is, the triple world (see Bailey 1983, 139–40). For humans, such rules, which have their model in sacrifice, apply primarily to the four *varṇa* categories that were created when the gods divided (*vyadadhuḥ*) Puruṣa and laid the first *dhármans* or "foundations" in *ṚV* 10.90.11–16 (see chapter 3 § B).

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where Bailey finds Rāma to be totally caught up in sorting out "rules," Bailey thus shows that the few references to Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ probably refer to Brahmā,[52] as is also the case in *Manu* where the pattern of instituting Brahmā's *vidhis* is obvious. But Brahmā does more "ordaining" in the *Rāmāyaṇa* than in the *Mahābhārata*. As Bailey indicates (1983, 143–49), Brahmā plots much of Rāma's story.[53] Yet it is not just Brahmā who shapes what is ordained; Brahmā puts the story into Vālmīki's hands to make it a poem (*kāvya*; *Rām* 1.2.22–40; see chapter 5). Only the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* tells us that Sītā's banishment was "appointed by Dhātṛ" (7.47.33)—as if Vākmīki leaves a space between Brahmā (taking Dhātṛ as Brahmā) and the poet.

In the *Mahābhārata*, however, where Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ appear in 140 usages,[54] Bailey is less successful in posing a consistent link between Brahmā and the pair. Rather, with this epic's *bhakti* swerve, who these two deities are and what they "place" and "ordain" is more a matter to ponder—like *dharma* itself, with its rules or injunctions and consequent dilemmas. What distinctions there are between Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ are subordinate to their complementarity and the sense that their rapport can be processual, with the Placer

52. The *Rāmāyaṇa* has five occurrences of Dhātṛ alone; zero of Vidhātṛ alone; and three of them together.

53. I agree with Bailey's overall analysis, but believe his attribution of "absolute determinism" to Brahmā's ordinances is not well considered. He overextends the implications of *vidhi* as "rule" to include ways that Brahmā "guides the action by means of timely ordinances, curses, and the giving of boons" (147). And where the *Rāmopākhyāna* mentions *vidhi* at the point of Sītā's fascination with the golden deer (*Mbh* 3.262.17) that Rāma will chase for her, enabling her abduction, Bailey treats this *Mbh* subtale as if it were generalized *Rāmāyaṇa*. This overlooks the ways that Vālmīki introduces different (and I believe new) nuances and complications by the play he gives the poet as an intervening character. See Hiltebeitel 2009*a*.

54. Dhātṛ is mentioned alone seventy-seven times; Vidhātṛ twenty-seven times; and seventeen passages mention them together. Counting a powerful single usage of Saṃvidhātṛ and a usage that includes Saṃdhātṛ among the thousand names of Viṣṇu (13.135.35b), the *Mbh* would have a total of 140 for both names.

always having priority.[55] Thus in one of the few *Mahābhārata* passages that delineates their roles one after another,[56] it is by honoring the ancient rule (*vidhi*) "ordained by the Placer (*dhātrā . . . vihitaḥ*)" that the Seven Seers shine in the sky and elephants stand tall as mountains, whereas all beings do what has been "ordained by the Ordainer (*vihitaṃ vidhātrā*) according to their own kind."[57] Otherwise, since most passages that mention the pair together suggest a joint operation, one must look to separate depictions to follow up suggestions of contrast. Cosmologically, certain passages give the impression that Dhātṛ takes care of large-scale work. For instance, once beings are linked with their *dharma* or *adharma*, injuriousness or noninjuriousness, etc., at each new creation, Dhātṛ thinks (*manyate*) variety into the great elements, sense-objects, and their forms (*mūrtiṣu*), and ordains (*vidadhāti*) the apportionment or distribution (*viniyogam*) of beings (*Mbh* 12.224.48–49).[58] Other passages then imply that Vidhātṛ sees to details over time. Thus everything "ordained by the Ordainer for man," notably goals or riches (*arthān*), "is acquired in Time" (*Mbh* 12.26.25–26). On this basis, Arjuna can tell Yudhiṣṭhira that the *daṇḍa* was "ordained by the Ordainer" to prevent confusion among the four classes and to preserve *dharma* and *artha*; if, for example, the Rod did not rule, a girl would not marry . . . (121,535–37)! The *Mahābhārata* also suggests contrasting usages for the individual: whereas Dhātṛ seems to have the most to do with setting things (seed, *svakarma*, *svadharma*, fate) in place for the beginning, end, and thus the whole of a lifetime, Vidhātṛ may have more to do with the specific working out of fate and *karma* at junctures within a lifetime. Thus, whereas Dhṛtarāṣṭra can lament that he must have done something wrong in earlier births since Dhātṛ has joined him to such wretched deeds in this one

55. See Monier-Williams [1899] 1964, 552 on Niyati (Destiny) and Āyati (the Long Run, Posterity) as daughters of Meru and Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ's Purāṇic wives.

56. See also *Mbh* 12.251.25: after Dhātṛ ordained wealth to be used not only for oneself but for others, Vidhātṛ anciently ordained "holding the world together" (*lokasaṃgraha*; cf. *BhG* 3.20), apparently implying each class's contribution to the social good. Also potentially contrastive are separate mentions in the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* (*The Thousand Names of Viṣṇu*): Dhātṛ among names suggestive of Viṣṇu's creative role in relation to Brahmā: "The Fundamental Sustainer, Dhātṛ, He Who Smiles (or Shines) Like an Opening Flower [at the Creation?], Ever-Awakened" (*ādhāranilayo dhātā puṣpahāsaḥ prajāgaraḥ*; 13.135.114); Vidhātṛ among names suggestive of the sun's rays and the accomplishment of activities: "Thousand-Rayed, Vidhātṛ, the One Marked with Accomplishments (*sahasraṃśur vidhātā kṛtalakṣaṇaḥ*; 13.135.64); cf. Chinmayananda 1993, 238, 133–34.

57. *Mbh* 3.26.13–15. I flag the double use of *vihita*, from *vi-√dhā*, with the instrumentals of both names. It phonetically accompanies Vidhātṛ, with whom it occurs in thirteen of the *Mahābhārata*'s twenty-seven mentions of him, more naturally than Dhātṛ, with whom it occurs in seven of seventy-seven mentions. Parallel constructions with the more versatile Dhātṛ use *sṛṣṭa* (created or issued, 9.30.34; 12.27.32, 66.20; 13.14.58; 129.2); *diṣṭa* (appointed or fated, 2.51.25, 52.14; 5.71.4); *ādiṣṭa* (determined or commanded, 9.58.9; 12.20.10); *nirdiṣṭa* (assigned or appointed, 9.64.22); *saṃkalpita* (determined or intended, 3.20.24); *codita* (impelled, 5.50.27); and *kṛta* (made, 14.79.15). Cf. also *nirmita* (fashioned, meted out) at *Rām* 1.14.18.

58. Cf. Bailey 1983, 140 on Dhātṛ's heavy-work in *Mārkaṇḍeya Puraṇā* 48.39–44.

(11.1.18),[59] Saṃjaya can tell him, "Who can ward off fate (*daivam*)? No one steps beyond the path ordained by the Ordainer (*vidhātṛvihitam mārgam*)" (1.1.186c–187b).[60] From these mostly latent contrasts, many of the ideas that might be communicated by epic characters mentioning Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ have emerged. I believe they can be broken down into five clearly interrelated clusters over which we must not linger. These five are seed-placing, which we might in some instances call genetic engineering;[61] character formation, sometimes implying the work of the author;[62] karma, sometimes in conjunction with *dharma* and *svadharma*;[63] fate;[64] and the food chain.[65] It is easy to see how *dharma* can intertwine all of these clusters with rules that can provoke dilemmas.

C. "Avatāra"

The *Bhagavad Gītā* does not use the term *avatāra*, and the *Mahābhārata* uses it quite inconspicuously only once.[66] Yet it provides early accounts of all but one

59. Cf. *Mbh* 3.199.14–16, where Dhātṛ's "rule" (*vidhi*) covers the lifelong *svakarma* and *svadharma* of a pious Śūdra meatseller; 5.173.5–6, where Ambā lists the Placer last (after Bhīṣma, her father, herself, and her once-betrothed Śālva) among those by whose folly she came to her plight; 6.108.18, where according to Droṇa, Ambā's reincarnation as Śikhaṇḍin was "ordained (*vihita*) by the Placer" to have been that of a woman, whereas fate (*daiva*) made him a man.

60. Cf. 1.99.29, where Satyavatī tells Vyāsa he is her "firstborn son, ordained by the Ordainer" (1.99.29). Also "ordained by the Ordainer" are Draupadī's winsome beauty (1.182.13) and rules of penance for Brahmins who wish to right what is done wrong (5.28.5). As noted, however, Sītā's banishment was appointed (*pradṛśyate*) by Dhātṛ (*Rām* 7.47.33).

61. See *Mbh* 3.31.21 and 37 (Draupadī says the Placer sets the course even before the ejaculation of seed; 12.219.112 (one repeatedly must reside in wombs where one is placed by Dhātṛ). Or, a disembodied heavenly voice can settle who fathered Śakuntalā's son Bharata by saying to King Duṣyanta, "You are the Placer (*dhātṛ*) of this embryo, Śakuntalā has spoken the truth" (1.69.30 = 1.90.32). For related verbal uses of √*dhā* with seeding the womb, see 1.85.12ab; 1.99.4; and 1.99.41.

62. See 12.27.32: tiring of Yudhiṣṭhira's grief, Vyāsa says, "As the Placer has created you for deeds, do them. Your perfection will come from that. You are not your own master all by yourself, king." The passage (26–32) hints at Vyāsa's authorship. Several characters are said to have been created by the Placer, notably Śikhaṇḍin: says Droṇa, Bhīṣma will not fight him because he was "ordained a woman by the Placer, and by fate (*daiva*) again became a man" (6.108.18)—a distinction already mentioned suggesting that Bhīṣma holds to the created order. Cf. 1.99.29 on Vyāsa; 1.182.13 on Draupadī; 9.5.12 on Aśvatthāman.

63. See chapter 10 § D for Draupadī's closing statement on Dhātṛ and karma to Yudhiṣṭhira (3.33.3–35), after which Bhīma intervenes mentioning Dhātṛ in connection with karma, *dharma*, and *svadharma* (3.34.52–54).

64. According to Dhṛtarāṣṭra (2.51.25) and Yudhiṣṭhira (2.52.14), the dice match is fated or appointed (*diṣṭa*) by the Placer. Yudhiṣṭhira says Dhṛtarāṣṭra cannot abandon Duryodhana whom "Dhātṛ has made subject to fate" (5.39.1). And Dhṛtarāṣṭra says his sons may as well be fighting the Wind, "fatally (*niyatam*) impelled by Dhātṛ, as game by a lion" (5.50.27).

65. Dhātṛ ordained the food for all creatures on earth to live on, protected by their own acts (*svakarmabhiḥ Mbh* 12.277.18). Snakes are the food ordained for Garuḍa by Vidhātṛ (1.14.23) or by Dhātṛ (5.103.4).

66. I thank Couture for correcting my impression that it does not occur at all. The instance refers to the ridges of Mount Gandhamādana, and "means 'a new descent of beauty, or a new way of making beauty visible on earth'" (Couture 2001, 314, citing *Mbh* 3.146.33).

of the figures later named in Purāṇic lists of the ten avatars—the omitted one, not surprisingly, being the Buddha. In telling these stories, the *Mahābhārata* does not typically speak of some of these figures as incarnations of Viṣṇu: most notably Rāma Jāmadagnya, also called Bhārgava Rāma (and later, as an avatar, Paraśurāma), and the Tortoise and Fish (the latter is still identified, as in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, with Prajāpati; *Mbh* 3.185.48).[67] But when the Pāṇḍavas meet the two Ṛṣis Lomaśa and Mārkaṇḍeya during their forest sojourn of Book 3, these sages tell of five of these figures in varied incarnational terms: the Boar, Man-Lion, and Dwarf as "forms" (*rūpa*) or "bodies" (*vapus*) of Viṣṇu (3.100.19–21); Rāma as "the Vaiṣṇava hero" (*taṃ vaiṣṇavaṃ śūram*; 3.275.65) in the *Rāmopākhyāna*;[68] and Kalki as the "fame (*yaśas*) of Viṣṇu," or Viṣṇuyaśas.[69] With Kṛṣṇa making six, this group seems to have been introduced as a sort of incarnational nucleus. And Rāma Jāmadagnya is mentioned as one of a cluster of "manifestations" (*prādhurbhāvas*) of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa in the *Nārāyaṇīya* (12.326.77).[70] There Nārāyaṇa tells Nārada about the manifestations he promised Brahmā he would make down through the *yugas* on behalf of the earth, the triple world, and the gods (including above all Brahmā himself, the creator) in this order: Boar, Man-Lion, Dwarf (not named but narratively indexed), Rāma Jāmadagnya, Rāma Dāśarathi (Rāma of the *Rāmāyaṇa*), and Kṛṣṇa.[71] The avatar mythology is thus more than just nascent in the *Mahābhārata*,[72] though it is yet to be shaped into the later formulations that require for some avatars, such as the Fish, Tortoise, and Boar, that new versions of their myths provide demons so that they can have someone wicked to conquer (see Biardeau 1989*a*, 103). The wicked are only generalized at *Bhagavad Gītā* 4.7–8. But the epic tunes this theme more finely in Mārkaṇḍeya's highly featured rendition of the Kalki myth, which may be the *Mahābhārata*'s most explicit formulation of the "just war" theology one finds in the *Bhagavad Gītā*—and for Yudhiṣṭhira's ears, primarily, rather than Arjuna's. As was discussed in chapter 7, the Kalki myth in the

67. See González-Reimann 2006*b*; Soifer 1991, 32 on the identification of Prajāpati also as boar and tortoise in the Brāhmaṇas.

68. In the *Rāmopākhyāna*; see also 3.260.5–7: earlier in this subtale, Brahmā says, "For that purpose the four-armed Viṣṇu has descended (*avatīrṇo. . viṣṇuḥ*) at my command," as discussed above in the text.

69. van Buitenen 1975, 597 takes *viṣṇuyaśas* (*Mbh* 3.188.89) as another name of Kalki; Ganguli [1884–96] 1970, 3: 412 as "he will glorify Vishnu."

70. See chapter 6 § B. As Hacker (1960, 50–52) and Couture (2001, 313) observe, this term seems to precede *avatāra* in referring to Viṣṇu's incarnations.

71. *Mbh* 12.326.61, 72–95, 327.85. Also among these "manifestations" are the Gander (Haṃsa) and Horse's head (Hayaśiras). In an interpolation found in mainly Telugu manuscripts (12.835* lines 3–5), after 12.326.76, Nārāyaṇa also tells Nārada a classical Purāṇic list of ten *prādurbhāvas*: Fish, Tortoise, Boar, Man-Lion, Dwarf, Rāma, Rāma, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, and Kalki. Note that with the cutely named three "Rāmas" [Jāmadagnya, Dāśarathi, and Balarāma], the list continues to have no place for the Buddha (see Oberlies 1997, 130).

72. See Pollock 1991, 38 n. 71 on "paradigmatic reference in the old battle books" of the *Mahābhārata* to the Man-Lion myth, citing 7.164.146, 168.21; cf. 3.100.20.

Mahābhārata offers a different outcome from Vyāsa's prophesy at the end of the *Harivaṃśa*, where the turn to the Kṛta yuga will occur without Viṣṇu making an intervention. Although the *Harivaṃśa* does know Kalki Viṣṇuyaśas for brief (at least in the Critical Edition) mention among Viṣṇu's manifestations (*HV* 31.148), its incarnational focus is more on Kṛṣṇa.

Once this Kalki myth is seen in its *Mahābhārata* context, it is clear that it carries along the epic's incarnational scheme. While the Pāṇḍavas are in the forest with Kṛṣṇa visiting, and listening to Mārkaṇḍeya's tales, this antediluvian Ṛṣi recounts that while he was surviving the dissolution of the universe swimming alone on the endless cosmic waters, he saw a child sleeping on a leaf of a banyan tree. Mārkaṇḍeya learns from this babe that, after he had long wandered in the worldly byways of the child's cosmic body, he had issued from its mouth into the waters. The child is none other than Nārāyaṇa, now awakened from the form in which he sleeps through the *pralaya*. The child tells Mārkaṇḍeya of his greatness as Nārāyaṇa, starting out (all but the vocative) with the same words as *Bhagavad Gītā* 4.7, and for the only other time in the epic:

> Whenever, sage, the Law languishes and Unlaw rears up (*yadā yadā dharmasya glānir . . . abhyutthānam adharmasya*), I create myself (*ātmānaṃ sṛjāmi*). When Daityas bent on harm spring up invincible to the chiefs of the Gods, and terrifying Rākṣasas, then I take on birth in the dwellings of the virtuous and, entering a human body (*praviṣṭo mānuṣaṃ deham*), I appease (*praśamyāmi*) it all. (3.187.26–28; van Buitenen 1975, 592)

Mārkaṇḍeya then further reveals that this child is none other Kṛṣṇa in the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī's very company, "your ally Janārdana . . . who sits here as though at play, . . . the Placer (Dhātṛ) and Ordainer (Vidhātṛ) and Destroyer (Saṃhartṛ), this Govinda, . . . the unborn God of the beginning, Viṣṇu the Person of the yellow robe," and that the five brothers and Draupadī[73] should "go to him for refuge, he will grant it" (187.50–53). It is just after the Pāṇḍavas receive comfort from Kṛṣṇa (188.2) that Yudhiṣṭhira is inspired to ask Mārkaṇḍeya what will happen "at the destruction of the *yuga* (*yugakṣaye*)" (6).[74]

As can be recalled from chapter 7, once Mārkaṇḍeya dispenses with the first three *yugas* using imperfect or present tense verbs (3.188.10 ff.), he describes the Kali *yuga* prophetically using future tense ones (15 ff.) to tell how Kalki, "the Fame of Viṣṇu, a Brahmin prodded by Time" (89ab), will come

73. She bows with the rest to Kṛṣṇa in the next verse (3.188.1).

74. On these passages, see further Hiltebeitel 2005*b*, 124–27; on similar usages of *yugakṣaye* in the *Yuga Purāṇa*, see chapter 7 §§ A.1 and A.3, with the difference that that text does not lead on to a next *yuga*.

under conditions of faltering *dharma*. As with the *Bhagavad Gītā*, these conditions begin with the debasement of class roles and mixed marriages (14–18); but they continue rather differently:

> The Brahmins shall find fault with the Veda and abandon their vows; seduced[75] by argumentation/logic (*hetuvādavilobhitāḥ*),[76] they will neither offer worship nor sacrifice. . . . The entire world will be barbarized (*mlecchabhūtam*),[77] without rites and sacrifices, without joy, and also without festivals. (3.188.26, 29)

This may recall the "repressive" centralization that marked imperial policies of the Mauryas, among whom Aśoka explicitly sought to neutralize popular religious assemblies.[78] Further along, we find the land dotted with *eḍūkas*, which I believe Hopkins and Biardeau[79] are right to have identified, at least in this context, as referencing Buddhist reliquaries or *stūpas*:

> The world will be totally upside down: people will abandon the gods and offer *pūjā* to *eḍūkas*; Śūdras will refuse to serve the twiceborn at the collapse of the *yuga*. In the hermitages of the great Ṛṣis, in the settlements of Brahmins, at the gods' temples (*devasthāneṣu*), in the Caitya sanctuaries, and in the abodes of Nāgas, the Earth will be marked by *eḍūkas* and not adorned by houses of the gods (*eḍūkacihnā pṛthivī na devagṛhabhūṣitā*). At the expiration of the *yuga*, that will be the mark of the *yuga*'s end. When men become ever-gruesome *dharma*-lacking meat-eaters and liquor-drinkers, the *yuga* will collapse. . . . Then the earth will soon be overrun by barbarians (*mlecchas*) while Brahmins, out of fear of the tax burden (*karabhārabhayād*), will flee to the ten directions. (64–67, 70)

Still more horrors are to follow (including the appearance of six suns; 188.75[80]), until, says Mārkaṇḍeya, the Kṛta *yuga* will begin anew (87):

75. Where the Critical Edition has *vilobhitāḥ* here, the Vulgate has *vimohitāḥ*. "deceived."

76. Biardeau glosses this as "led into error by discussions that pretend to be logical," implying conversations especially with Buddhists that would take place outside the ritual arena (2002, 2: 760; cf. 778).

77. Or "mlecchified" (Ganguli [1884–96] 1970, 3: 409). Mārkaṇḍeya repeats this phrase; see 3.188.37a (variant) and 45a.

78. See chapter 2 on Minor Rock Edict 1 and Aśoka's prohibition of *samājas*.

79. See Hopkins ([1901] 1969, 399; cf. 391, 475); Biardeau (2002, 2: 759–60; see also Bronkhorst 2007, 5–6, 359–60: "The term *eḍuka* (Buddhist Sanskrit *eluka*) refers no doubt to stūpas, but our passage does not tell us whether Buddhist, Jaina, or Ajīvika stūpas are meant" (5 n. 14). As mentioned in chapter 6, Bronkorst seems to defer to González-Reimann 2002, 95 ff. on a late dating for the passage, which I see no reason to accept.

80. As Biardeau 1994, 23 observes, it is clearly the end of a Kali *yuga* preceding a Kṛta *yuga*, but the sudden appearance of the six suns is clearly a "borrowing" ("emprunt") from a *kalpa*-ending *pralaya*.

> A Brahmin by the name of Kalki Viṣṇuyaśas will arise, prodded by Time (*kālapracoditaḥ*), of great prowess, wisdom, and might. He will be born in the village of Sambhala in an auspicious Brahmin dwelling, and at his mere thought all vehicles, weapons, warriors, arms, and coats of mail will wait on him. He will be king, a Turner of the Wheel (*cakravartī*), victorious by *dharma* (*dharmavijayī*), and he will bring this turbulent world to tranquility. That rising Brahmin, blazing, ending the destruction, noble minded, will be the destruction of all and the one who makes the *yuga* turn. Surrounded by Brahmins, that Brahmin will extirpate the lowly barbarian hosts (*kṣudrān . . . mlecchagaṇān*) wherever they are.[81] After destroying the robbers he will ritually make over (*kalpayiṣyati*) this earth to the twiceborn at a great sacrifice (*mahāyajñe*), the horse sacrifice. He will reestablish the auspicious limits that the Self-Existent has ordained. And when he has grown old in works of holy fame, he will retire to the forest. People who live in the world will follow his morality (*śīlam*). And with the thieves (*cora*) destroyed by the Brahmins, safety will prevail. Establishing black antelope skins, spears, tridents, and emblematic arms in the conquered territories (*deśeṣu vijiteṣu*), that tiger-like Brahmin Kalki, praised by the chief Brahmins and honoring their leaders, shall walk the earth forever bent upon slaughter of the robbers (*dasyus*). The robbers will wail piteously, "Ah father, Ah son!" as he leads them to destruction. *Adharma* will decline and *dharma* increase, Bhārata, and the people will observe the rites when the Kṛta age arrives. *Ārāmas* (resting-places), *caityas* (sanctuaries), temple tanks, wells, and the many ceremonies (*kriyāś ca vividhā*) will reappear in the Kṛta *yuga*. Brahmins will be strict (*sādhavaḥ*), Munis will do *tapas*, hermitages with heretics (*āśramāḥ sahapāṣaṇḍāḥ*) will be firm in truth; people will be subjects. . . . (3.188.89–189.9)

Epic rarities like Buddhist shrines and heretical hermitages,[82] a world restored to the great Ṛṣis and Brahmanical temples,[83] Brahmins fleeing tax burdens imposed by barbarian kings, Brahmin fighters regaining "conquered territories" apparently without Kṣatriya help and redharmifying them with antelope skins: this heady "futurist" mix is adroit in admitting conditions that are not

81. An *adhyāya* break occurs here, resumed with "Vaiśaṃpāyana said" as the next *adhyāya* begins.

82. It would seem that the *āśramas* that give residence to heretics will cease to do so. It is interesting that this Brahmanical term may be used to describe post-Aśokan Buddhist *vihāras* (on which see Schopen 2004, 76–77).

83. This prophesy provides not only the sole instances of *eḍūka* in the *Mahābhārata* but those as well of *devasthāna* and *devagṛha* in the sense of "temple" (to which the *Rāmāyaṇa* adds a *devasthāna* only at 2.94.3).

otherwise given narration in the archaicized "epic ages" of either epic. It can be taken as ex eventu prophesy based on conditions familiar from the time of the passage's author, and still familiar as well to the authors of *Manu*[84] and the *Yuga Purāṇa*. But even without Kṣatriyas being mentioned to this point, the myth goes on to charter the reestablishment of the same societal roles and classes as the *Bhagavad Gītā*: Brahmins will be devoted to soft recitation of the Veda (*japa*) and sacrifices; they will love *dharma* (*dharmakāmāḥ*) and be dedicated to their six occupations (*ṣaṣkarmaniratā viprāḥ*). Kings will rule this earth by the Law and delight in protection. Vaiśyas will be dedicated to practical affairs (*vyavahāraratāḥ*). Śūdras will take delight in what they hear from (i.e., they will be obedient to) the three classes (*śuśrūṣāyāṃ ratāḥ śūdrās tathā varṇatrayasya ca*). The Cakravartin Kalki has been "victorious by *dharma*"; "this *dharma*" will last through the first three *yugas* (11–13), with its complete carryover into a Kṛta Yuga and beyond to a point in the next *mahāyuga* cycle. The Kalki myth does for the ideal Brahmin what the *Bhagavad Gītā* does for the ideal Kṣatriya, and in a future that confirms the standards of "just war" for both classes: indeed for all ages and all *varṇas*. It translates the *Gītā*'s concept of "just war" from *kṣatriya svadharma* to a version of Rājadharma regenerated by Brahmins,[85] and has the ears of the Brahmin-oriented Yudhiṣṭhira with the battle of Kurukṣetra still to come.

Indeed, rather than it being an impediment to dating the composition of the *Mahābhārata* to the Śuṅga period or a time shortly after it because the epic would oppose the Śuṅgas for being Brahmins rather than Kṣatriyas, the Kalki myth would legitimize Śuṅga rule—in theory—as a desirable interim measure.[86] It is important to recognize that, in theory, *varṇa* is nongenealogical. Beginning right from the *Puruṣa Sūkta*, the four orders are born, with the Brahmin first, not as lineages but as categories. As a Brahmin, the Cakravartin Kalki reestablishes the four orders. Indeed, so does Kaśyapa after the decimation of the Kṣatriyas by Rāma Jāmadagnya (see chapter 7 § A.3).

But we are not done with the latency of the avatar doctrine in the *Mahābhārata*. This epic's uses of the verb *ava*-√*tṝ* and derivatives also point toward incipient developments of the concept itself. Here we begin to

84. Both the *Mahābhārata*'s postwar anthologies and *Manu* agree that Brahmin Veda scholars (*śrotriyas*) should be exempt from taxation (*Mbh* 12.77.7–9; cf. 97.21; *M* 7.133; 8.394) and that Brahmins have the right to take up *kṣatradharma* in times of distress (*Mbh* 12.79.1; *M* 10.81).

85. So too the Rāma Jāmadagnya story, in its repeated killings of the Kṣatriyas at Kurukṣetra, presents a Brahmin who can be treated as a king. See *Mbh* 7 Appendix I, No. 8, listing him among the "Sixteen Kings" mentioned (at line 853, he brought all the eighteen islands under subjugation). The CE considers this unit an interpolation because Śāradā and Kaśmīrī manuscripts omit it, accepting the version at 12.29 which has fourteen of the same kings, but not Rāma Jāmadagnya. See Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 346 n. 28.

86. This departs from the position I took in Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 17, which is also taken by Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 122.

explore how the metaphor of "descent," which, as we have noted, Couture has developed in relation to the descent of actors onto a stage, *does* mix with the theme of genealogy. Here the *Mahābhārata* provides an instance that links the two epics. In the *Mahābhārata*'s *Rāmopākhyāna*, at the moment of Rāma's conception, Brahmā tells the gods and Ṛṣis how Rāvaṇa will be killed: "For that purpose the four-armed Viṣṇu has descended (*avatīrṇo . . . viṣṇuḥ*) at my command" (*Mbh* 3.260.5)—whereupon Brahmā goes on to direct the hosts of gods to take birth on earth as "Viṣṇu's companions (*viṣṇoḥ sahāyān*)" (3.260.6–7), that is, as the monkeys and bears who will be his allies.[87]

Among terms derived from *ava√tṝ*, however, the one with the greatest genealogical range in the epics and the *Harivaṃśa* is *avataraṇa*. Couture centers discussion on two usages. He observes that both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivaṃśa* use *avataraṇa* prominently with reference to the *aṃśāvataraṇa* or "descent in portions" of deities and other supernaturals, and remarks that in the *Harivaṃśa*, examples of Viṣṇu's *avataraṇa* are also "easily found."[88] *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 5.1.2 then "replaces" *aṃśa-avataraṇa* with *aṃśa-avatāra* with respect to Viṣṇu's birth as Kṛṣṇa in the family of Yadu (2001, 314).

Couture also touches on another usage of *avataraṇa* in the *Mahābhārata*, that of Gaṅgā (*gaṅgāvataraṇa*), this time without any such usage in the *Harivaṃśa*'s Critical Edition, although there is an interpolated one in the *Harivaṃśa* Vulgate.[89] Indeed, why should the *Harivaṃśa* have a *gaṅgāvataraṇa*. Mathurā is, after all, on the Yamunā River, not the Gaṅgā. In this case, however, the term *gaṅgāvataraṇa* is used most prominently in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (*Rām* 1.41.6, 43.13). There, Rāma hears from Viśvāmitra how his Ikṣvāku ancestor Bhagīratha, by his *tapas*, brought down the celestial Gaṅgā from the sky (*gaganāt*; 42.7), her "mighty fall" (*gaṅgāpatanamuttamam*; 42.10) broken by passing through the coils of Śiva's matted hair, so that her waters would cleanse the ashes of "all his grandfathers" (43.7), the 60,000 sons of Sagara, who had dug up the earth looking for their father's stolen sacrificial horse and been reduced to ashes by the sage Kapila when they finally found it. The Gaṅgā will descend both to cleanse the ashes of Sagara's sons and to fill the great excavations they made in the earth—the latter, as foreseen by Brahmā, is all part of a former divine plan, about which he reassures the

87. The same term (*sahāya*) is used by Vaiśaṃpāyana in the *Rāmopākhyāna*'s "frame" to describe the monkeys, bears, Pāṇḍavas, and allies of Indra (276.5–10—four times).

88. Couture 2001, 314, 322 cites *HV* 44.82, addressed by Nārada to Viṣṇu, as one instance: "At the moment of your descent (or entrance) [on the stage at Mathurā), Kaṃsa will perish (*tavāvataraṇe . . . kaṃsaḥ sa vinaśiṣyati*)."

89. *HV* Vlg. 2.93.24–27; Couture 2001, 324 n. 8.

gods (1.38.23–39.4). Yet there is a third and still more basic reason for this descent of the Gaṅgā, which Viśvāmitra suggests at the very beginning of his story:

> Gently smiling, Viśvāmitra once more addressed Kākutstha, "Rāma, you shall now hear the whole story of great Sagara. Himavat, greatest of mountains and father-in-law of Śaṃkara, stands confronting the Vindhya range. The two in fact directly face each other. Best of men, tiger among men, the sacrifice took place between these two ranges, for it is said that this is the best region (*deśa*) for sacrifices." (*Rām* 1.38.3–5; Goldman 1984, 197–98 trans.)

That is an expansive version of the "region best for sacrifices," which is obviously meant to include Kosala, where the Gaṅgā flows by the kingdom of the Ikṣvākus. King Sagara's sacrifice began in that land before it was sanctified by the river. Couture takes brief note that the *Mahābhārata* knows the term *gaṅgāvataraṇa* (3.106.38; 3.108.13) along with this basic story, but the ways it contrasts with the *Rāmāyaṇa* are informative. First, it fits it into the story of Agastya (3.104–8). In the *Agastya Upākhyāna*, the sons of Sagara do not go looking for the horse in their massive diggings into the earth; they go to the ocean's floor after Agastya has drunk up the ocean. The *Mahābhārata* thus provides a different background for Gaṅgā's descent. Agastya does not figure in the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s account; the sons of Sagara do not dig up the earth in the *Mahābhārata*'s. In the same note, Couture also cites another *Mahābhārata* usage, actually of *gaṅgāvatīrṇa* (13.27.87), which occurs in a long recitation of Gaṅgā's merits by her son Bhīṣma after Yudhiṣṭhira has asked him where one finds the most meritorious regions (*deśas*), countries (*janapadas*), hermitages, mountains, and rivers—to which Bhīṣma replies at length on the misfortune of those who live in countries not watered by the Gaṅgā (13.27.18, 25–105). From the standpoint of both location and genealogy, then, the *gaṅgāvataraṇa* is more the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s story than the *Mahābhārata*'s. But the person of Bhīṣma Gāṅgeya reminds us that the *Mahābhārata* has done something similar to the *Rāmāyaṇa* in bringing Mother Gaṅgā down to earth. It has done it *upriver* in the hallowed land of the Kurus. As we have seen in chapter 8, which is where the divine plan seems to enter the *itihāsa* of the Bhāratas after Gaṅgā tells King Pratīpa,

> So be it, *dharma*-knower. May I unite with your son. So by devotion to you will I love the famous Bhārata lineage. Whoever are the kings of the earth, you[r dynasty is] their refuge. I am unable to speak the qualities that are renowned of your lineage in even a hundred years. (1.92.12–13)

Although *this* descent by Gaṅgā is not explicitly referred to as *gaṅgāvataraṇa*, it is, to put it simply, recounted within, and as a defining moment in, the *Mahābhārata*'s *aṃśāvataraṇa*.

We can thus see that in both epics, Gaṅgā intervenes in their dynastic genealogies and descends into their central lands. The *Rāmāyaṇa* tells of her origins as an earthly river; the *Mahābhārata* about her additional descent in person. In the *Mahābhārata*, however, her descent into Kuru country, and into dramas of the Kuru court, capital, and lands, provides just one of the arresting usages of the term *avataraṇa*. Here, I believe that Couture's attention to the theatrical resonances of the term have brought him up short of seeing a major thread in the *Mahābhārata*'s usages. But I must add that it is my own fieldwork on Tamil *Mahābhārata* dramas performed at Draupadī and Dharmarāja temples and festivals that brings me to go this extra mile. Draupadī cult *terukkūttus* not only stage the *Mahābhārata*. They stage it, even though the actors speak Tamil in Tamil villages, at such places as Vraja if there is an opening play about Kṛṣṇa; at the Pañcāla capital for Draupadī's *svayaṃvara*; from there on, once the Pāṇḍavas bring her home, at the Pāṇḍava and Kuru courts at Indraprastha and Hāstinapura; and finally at Kurukṣetra.[90] With that in mind, I think we should read another *Mahābhārata* instance of *avataraṇa* both theatrically, as Couture does,[91] and from this additional geographical standpoint.

The term makes a striking double appearance when Kṛṣṇa, having decided to make one last effort to avoid war, determines to go as the Pāṇḍavas last ambassador to the Kuru court. Both Yudhiṣṭhira and Vidura, the son and incarnation of Dharma, respectively, express reservations as to whether Kṛṣṇa should "descend" into what, genealogically, amounts to the epic's camp of demons. First, before Kṛṣṇa departs, he hears from Yudhiṣṭhira,

> I do not agree, Kṛṣṇa, that you should go to the Kurus. Suyodhana will not accept your advice. The earth's assembled warrior class comes under the sway of Suyodhana. Your descent in their midst does not please [me], Kṛṣṇa (*teṣām madhyāvataraṇaṃ tava kṛṣṇa na rocaye*). Surely, not a thing would comfort us, not divinity—let alone happiness—not the overlordship of all Immortals, with your obstruction, Mādhava. (5.70.82–84)

Then, once Kṛṣṇa has arrived at the Kuru court, he hears the same, with only a tweaking of the pronouns and the syntax, from Vidura:

> "When all those villains are huddled together, your descent in [their] midst does not please me, Kṛṣṇa (*tava madhyāvataraṇaṃ mama kṛṣṇa na rocaye*)." (5.90.15)

90. See Hiltebeitel 1988, 131–435. The somewhat optional play for Kṛṣṇa is called *Kaṇṇaṉ Jalakkiriṭai*, "Kṛṣṇa's Water Sports," in which Vraja is *āyarpāṭi*, "the village of the cowherders" (185–86).

91. Couture interprets the two passages mentioned in the text with the comment that *avataraṇa* can suggest "the appearance of an outsider in the middle of a place, a group, or even a region" (2001, 325 n. 12).

This double usage of *avataraṇa*, which has to do with the hospitality Kṛṣṇa will receive at the Kuru court, recalls Nārada's vision, at the Pāṇḍava court in Indraprastha, of the impending doom that awaits all the gathered Kṣatriyas at Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya. "Descent" is a major meaning of *avataraṇa* in both epics and the *Harivaṃśa*, and although there is another meaning that it is linked with, "the taking down of a load" that is used in the *Mahābhārata* for the "unburdening of the Earth," it is hard to see that the latter would be the more basic or older meaning.[92] I would agree with Couture that both meanings would be at play when "the term *avatṝ* alerts the audience listening to the great Epics to the extended *śleṣa* (or double entendre) that runs throughout the entire text" (323).

These instances support considering another intriguing usage in the same vein. The verb *ava-tṝ* occurs in six places where divinely incarnated heroes "descend to Kurukṣetra," which is, after all, not only the "*dharma* field" where they fight the *Mahābhārata* war but the "high altar (*uttaravedi*) of Prajāpati" (*Mbh* 9.52.20), to which the Vedic gods descend in sacrifice, and to which Indra in particular descended to give King Kuru the boon that warriors who die there will go straight to heaven. Some of the most interesting of these usages occur in close proximity. First, after the war, the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa return to the battlefield and reach Kurukṣetra (*avatīrya kurukṣetram*; 12.48.3) now mired with the remains of the slain warriors, "strewn with what seemed to be billions of human skulls" (Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 275). And shortly after, with two usages, they cross to where Bhīṣma will soon begin his lengthy *dharma* oration:

> Seeming to gulp down the sky (*grasanta ivākāśam*), these [Kṛṣṇa's] swift, powerful horses crossed [down to] the Field of Kuru (*kurukṣetram avātaran*), the field of the whole of the Law (*kṣetraṃ dharmasya kṛtsnasya*). They went where the lord Bhīma rested upon the bed of arrows in the midst of Brahmarṣis, like Brahmā amidst the crowd of the Gods. Govinda then descended from his chariot (*avatīrya govindo rathāt*), and so did Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, the Gāṇḍīva bowman [Arjuna], the twins, and Sātyaki.[93]

As noted in chapter 11, "the field of the whole of the Law" projects the first words of the *Bhagavad Gītā*—*kurukṣetre dharmakṣetre*—toward some kind

92. Fitzgerald 2004*b*, 55 says *avataraṇa*'s first meaning is "a 'taking down,' a relieving of the burden that oppressed the earth," and "[o]nly later . . . came to signify the 'descent' of a deity for such a rescue mission." See Hacker 1960, 58–60 with this view, but also mentioning that the term takes on a doubled meaning in the text. Couture finds that the *Mahābhārata* uses the term *avataraṇa* four times in the sense of "taking down a load" (319).

93. *Mbh* 12.53.23–25; Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 286 trans., slightly modified, with my brackets. Sātyaki is a kinsman of Kṛṣṇa, and these seven are the sole major survivors of the battle on the Pāṇḍava side.

of completion in the *dharma* anthologies of Bhīṣma, which these seven war-survivors are arriving to hear. As Fitzgerald's translation of the three usages of *ava-tṝ* indicate, it is possible to render some of these usages as "reach" or "cross," but why obscure the nuance of "descent" when the crossing is compared to the gulping down of the sky—indeed, of space (*ākāśa*)? In fact, the descending subjects in all six passages are linked only with the Pāṇḍava side and/or the entourage of Kṛṣṇa.[94] This suggests that they are describing what Fitzgerald has called the "divine raiding party of the gods" (2004*c*), by which he is referring to the divine plan of the *aṃśāvatarаṇa* by which the gods will relieve the burden of the earth. I would thus submit that we have cumulative evidence for what I would call a *Mahābhārata* "descent convention"[95] that uses derivatives of the verb *ava-tṝ before* the noun *avatāra* becomes a favored Purāṇic term. I believe Couture is entirely right to call attention to theatrical resonances in many of the most vivid usages, but I believe the ultimate stages or arenas in question, in the context of the *Mahābhārata*, have to do with what the epic calls the Kuru *dharma*. One is the arena of Vedic sacrifice, especially at Kurukṣetra as the "altar of the gods."[96] After all, where did Śrī and Agni first come forth as Draupadī and Dhṛṣṭadyumna to do the "work of the gods" but at the sacrifice of King Yajñasena? And the others are the Kuru courts of Law at Indraprastha and Hāstinapura.

We may thus consider the *Mahābhārata* to have launched both an incarnational (and thus genealogical) theology centered on Viṣṇu and a vocabulary of divine descent centered on Kṛṣṇa (and also used for Rāma), but without yet coordinating the two by the actual term *avatāra*. For the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself, we have only the former. Its divine plan is likewise centered on Viṣṇu, but without the verbal play of a "descent convention." The aged and sonless King Daśaratha's three wives bear four sons (*Rām* 1.14–17.9), all partial incarnations of Viṣṇu, who has chosen Daśaratha to be his father (15.7) so that he and other gods, who get their directions from Brahmā to take birth as monkeys (16.1–6), can dispatch

94. The other usages of *ava-tṝ* with Kurukṣetra describe the Pāṇḍavas and Somakas (6.1.3); Baladeva (9.53.33); Yudhiṣṭhira (15.30.16); and Arjuna accompanying the remaining Vṛṣṇi women after the death of their kinsman Kṛṣṇa (16.8.65).

95. On poetic conventions in the epics, see Hiltebeitel 2004*a*, 220–26, in a discussion that addresses some of the passages mentioned here. Against this background, one may also recall the instance of Vārṣṇeya, Nala's charioteer in the *Nalopākhyāna* with one of the easily recognizable names of Kṛṣṇa, who is found descending (*avatīrya vārṣṇeyo*) from a chariot that Nala is actually driving. As such, he doubles in the Nala story, as a prefiguration of Kṛṣṇa who is called Vārṣṇeya, as a member of the Vṛṣṇi clan (Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 219, 225–26).

96. Following up on the implications of Nārada's vision at the Rājasūya, Couture does say, "The Kurukṣetra itself, the battlefield on which the war takes place, looks like a mythic *raṅgabhūmi* where Devas as well as Asuras come to fight" (2001, 321). Of course the *Nāṭyaśāstra* itself interprets the origins of theater in sacrifice.

Rāvaṇa. The firstborn Rāma gets the biggest share (*bhāga*) of Viṣṇu's endowment; Bharata the next largest; and Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna smaller portions (17.6–9).

Vālmīki, as we shall see, for the most part leaves Rāma's incarnation of Viṣṇu to hints (reminders, foreshadowings, similes, allusions), but sometimes makes it obvious. Let me just note one instance that goes beyond what is said in the *Rāmopākhyāna*, yet is structurally paralleled in the *Mahābhārata*. Amid the prewar dialogues that take place on both sides, Rāvaṇa's wise maternal grandfather Mālyavān counsels him to make peace with Rāma and return Sītā. Explaining that the gods and Ṛṣis desire Rāma's victory, Mālyavān differentiates *dharma* and *adharma* as divine and demonic alternatives, alludes to the (*Mahābhārata*) idea that the king defines the *yuga*, and says that throughout the regions, the Ṛṣis, equal to Agni, are performing fiery Vedic rites and austerities that are damaging the Rākṣasas. Foreseeing their destruction, he notes the sinister omens surrounding Laṅkā, and concludes, "I think Rāma is Viṣṇu abiding in a human body. Surely this Rāghava is no mere man by whom this bridge, the highest wonder, is built over the ocean. Make peace with Rāma" (6.26.31–32). Mālyavān not only sees things rightly but, with the inversion of seeing them from the hopeless side of the demons, provides analogs to certain features of the *Bhagavad Gītā*: a theology for the war about to happen and a disclosure of the hidden divinity behind it—in this case, hidden so far even from himself.[97] Rāvaṇa is, of course, no more impressed by such warnings than Duryodhana.

With his focus mainly on Ayodhyā, Laṅkā, and the southward-reaching forests of Rāma's exile, Vālmīki, as we have seen, gives the *gaṅgāvataraṇa* an expansive eastward orientation. But the *Rāmāyaṇa* does mention *madhyadeśa* once, and in a surprising context that shows Rāma to be perfectly aware of what lies upriver in the lands of the lunar dynasty, and his brother Bharata to have a likely intimation of the *Mahābhārata* itself. Rāma tells Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa that now that he has "truly done the excellent work of the twiceborn (*kṛtaṃ mayā yathā tathyaṃ dvijakāryam anuttamam*)" (7.74.3ab), he would like to perform a Rājasūya sacrifice. By this time, Rāma can speak of *dvijakāryam*, "the work of the twiceborn," as equivalent to *devakāryam*, "the work of the gods." Presumably he regards a Rājasūya as appropriate to his being consecrated at last as king. He says he is motivated to restore the "bridge of *dharma*" (*dharmasetu*), and regards the Rājasūya as "eternal *dharma*" (3–4). But Bharata, in terms that certainly remind one more of Yudhiṣṭhira's *rājasūya* than any of the divine ones Rāma mentions

97. Cf. Goldman and Sutherland Goldman 2009, 33 (I leave above what I wrote before I could see what they write): "Indeed [Mālyavān's] reference to the eternal conflict between *dharma* and *adharma* is reminiscent of Vaiṣṇava framings of the theology of the *avatāra* as put forth in such texts as the *Bhagavad Gītā*."

as precedent,[98] asks Rāma how he could perform a sacrifice "where one sees the destruction of the lineages of the earth's kings (*pṛthivyām rājavaṃśānāṃ vināśo yatra dṛśyate*)" (74.12). After Rāma gratefully accepts Bharata's counsel and decides against a Rājasūya, Lakṣmaṇa chimes in to recommend a horse sacrifice instead, since it frees from sins, and tells how Indra performed an Aśvamedha that rid him of the sin of killing the Brahmin Vṛtra (7.75–77)—all of which reminds one, without saying so, that Rāvaṇa was a Brahmin. Rāma then agrees with his brothers and tells another story about the powers of the Aśvamedha: one that goes back into the antiquities of the lunar dynasty.

King Ila of Balkh (Bactria) once went on a terrible hunting—better, slaughtering—expedition that led him from his Afghan capital to some fairly high reaches of the Gaṅgā. There, amusing Umā, Śiva had transformed himself and all creatures around him into females. Ila and all his army became women. Umā softened matters a bit by allowing Ila to change sex on a monthly basis, as Ilā and Ila, stipulating that neither would remember anything of the alternations (78.26–28). Soon thereafter, Ilā caught the eye of Budha, the planet Mercury and son of the Moon, who was doing *tapas* in that forested region, and after a brief courtship,[99] she became pregnant. By the time Budha saw her first change into a man, he had a sense of what was going on, and got Ila to agree to stay with him for a year, during which, in the ninth month, after alternating sexes in the interim, Ilā gave birth to Budha's son Purūravas (79–80). Budha and a conclave of Ṛṣis then consulted as to what to do next, when Ila's father Kardama, presumably in retirement, happened by from Balkh with some other sages.[100] Kardama pronounced that the only remedy he could see to get his son's masculinity back was for the sages to perform an Aśvamedha near Budha's ashram, honoring the bull-bannered Śiva (81.12–15). When the horse sacrifice was over, Śiva told the priests he was pleased with their *bhakti* and asked, "What shall I do for the king of the Bāhlis?" He met their request for the return of Ila's manhood, vanished, and all the sages returned whence they came. King Ila renounced his capital in Balkh, leaving it to his son Śaśabindu, and "founded Pratiṣṭhāna city, unsurpassed and celebrated, in *madhyadeśa* (*madhyadeśe hyanuttamam/niveśayāmāsa puraṃ pratiṣṭhānaṃ yaśaskaram*)" (78.21b–d). There King Purūravas, Ila's son,

98. Rāma mentions one by which Mitra obtained Varuṇahood, which sounds perhaps benign, and also mentions one done "in accord with *dharma* by the *dharma*-knowing Soma," which the *Mahābhārata* tells us led to no good. See Harindranath 2010.

99. This involves Budha learning from Ila's feminized armed forces that Ilā has no husband, and turning them into Kiṃpuruṣīs, "What-Woman" who will henceforth roam the slopes with Kiṃpuruṣas, the "What-Men" who often go about with the Gandharvas (1.79.20–24).

100. *Kardama* means "mud, slime, mire, clay, dirt, filth" (MW 258), and his name presumably reflects the typical aspersions on the people of Bactria and Madra one finds in the *Mahābhārata*. See chapter 8 § F and n. 104.

succeeded him (22). Note that Purūravas is called the son of the male rather than the female Ila/Ilā, and is not called the son of Budha. Rāma is perhaps nodding to some preferred notion of primogeniture.[101] His story stops here, but in the *Mahābhārata* the lunar line can be traced from Purūravas through Āyus, Nahuṣa, and Yayāti to Pūru, the youngest of Yayāti's five sons who inherits *madhyadeśa* when Yayāti distributes the earth among them.[102]

Rāma's tale sounds at times like a spoof on the lunar dynasty's early genealogy, though we should pause over the point that, having now banished Sītā, he will be performing his Aśvamedha with a golden statue as her substitute, which he might be making light of as well. The Aśvamedha that restores Ila's masculinity does not say how that exactly worked out, or what if anything he/she did in it as Ilā. Pratiṣṭhāna, however, gets a striking description in the *Mahābhārata* that makes a fitting close to this section on "descent" and the geography of *madhyadeśa*. Says Nārada to the pilgrim Pāṇḍavas:

> The land between the Ganges and the Yamunā is known as the vagina of the earth (*pṛthivyā jaghanaṃ smṛtam*); and Prayāga and Pratiṣṭhāna, thus the seers know, form the end of the vagina, the vulva (*prayāgaṃ jaghanasyāntam upasthamṛṣayo viduḥ*). Prayāga, Kambala, Aśvatara, and the ford Bhogavatī are declared to be the altars of Prajāpati (*vedī proktā prajāpateḥ*). There the Vedas and sacrifices take on bodily form, Yudhiṣṭhira, and with the Seers of great vows wait upon Prajāpati. (3.83.71–73; van Buitenen trans. 1975, 396)

The *Mahābhārata* Critical Edition does not seem to have much more to tell us about Pratiṣṭhāna other than that it still remained the Lunar Dynasty capital when Garuḍa told the indebted disciple Gālava, "My friend (*sakhā*) in the Lunar lineage . . . Yayāti, son of Nahuṣa" lived there, and flew Gālava to Pratiṣṭhāna to see if Yayāti could help him pay off the debt (5.112–6.9). By the time of King Duṣyanta, the dynasty had settled at Hāstinapura. But the Southern Recension interpolates a long passage in which the dynastic progenitrix Śakuntalā and her son Bharata approach Hāstinapura by way of Pratiṣṭhāna, which is portrayed as still thriving as a kind of idyllic place (*Mbh* 1, App. I, Nos. 47 and 48). According to Wilson, "Pratishṭhána was situated on the eastern side of the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna" ([1840] 1972, 280 n. 7). This would put it opposite to Prayāga, which would be inside the confluence, and might help to explain how the two sites

101. See Brodbeck 2009*a*, 101, citing *Mbh* 1.70.16: "Purūravas the sapient was born from Ilā; indeed, she was his mother and his father too—or that's what we've heard." Brodbeck interprets Ilā as a *putrikā*, and as producing "heirs for two families" (102, 144). See further Brodbeck 2010*d*.

102. *Mbh* 1.79. See Dumézil 1973, 15–20; Defourny 1978, 134–37.

together form the "end of the vagina." It would be nice to know more about the Lunar Dynasty's capitals in Madhyadeśa. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* account, Ila seems to have come downriver a considerable way to establish Pratiṣṭhāna for Purūravas at the outer tip of the Doab. Perhaps it is a way of saying that when Pūru inherited Madhyadeśa, he inherited it right at the center.[103]

D. Friendship, Hospitality, and Separation

So we have now mapped *dharma* and *bhakti* down to some places on earth. We turn to friendship, hospitality, and separation as interrelated themes or discourses, each involving norms and practices, in which *dharma* and *bhakti* coincide.[104] With hospitality, if we simply ask who hosts Kṛṣṇa and Rāma in these epics? who do they host in turn? how and where do they go about it? what are the issues involved? what is the tone or mood created? we get into revealing material. And similarly with friendship. We have seen in chapter 10 how Sītā suffers in separation from Rāma. A wrenching devotional tone or mood can also be noticed in circumstances where Rāma or Kṛṣṇa are parting and people accompany them as far as possible and then hold them dearly in mind.

The epics are sometimes very attentive to such departures, and to the demeanor and moods of those who follow Rāma and Kṛṣṇa as far as they can, in ways that are not the case for the comings and goings of other "characters." Rāma's prolonged departure from Ayodhyā is perhaps well enough known to be recalled only in a few details below. The *Mahābhārata* describes four such departures of Kṛṣṇa, plus his final departure from the world.[105] Most representative is his poignant last farewell, which comes after Kṛṣṇa, out of goodheartedness (*sauhṛdāt*; 14.16.6), has lingered longer than he wished to help Arjuna to remember the *Bhagavad Gītā* by telling him the *Anugītā*:

> Hari . . . then set out from the City of the Elephant [Hāstinapura] on his divine chariot drawn by four horses. Having with Yudhiṣṭhira's permission caused his sister Subhadrā to mount and also his paternal

103. On *madhyadeśa*, see (as last cross-referenced) chapter 8 n. 44. On Pratiṣṭhāna, Dubey 2001, 14–39, takes its likely location to be the unexcavated Jhūsī mound across the Ganges from Allahabad, occupied into medieval times.

104. For further discussion of these themes, see the four studies cited at the beginning of § A above.

105. The first two come after the founding of the Pāṇḍavas' first capital at Indraprastha (2.2.1–23) and the stated completion of Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya (2.42.45–59); the third, when Kṛṣṇa leaves the Pāṇḍavas at Upaplavya (their prewar camp) to go to the Kurus (5.81.6–57); the fourth, discussed in the text, before Yudhiṣṭhira's Aśvamedha in Book 14. Kṛṣṇa's final departure comes in Book 16 (see two notes down). Taken all together, it may be noticed that the focus shifts from leaving Yudhiṣṭhira in the first two to leaving Arjuna in the last two, while in the third Kṛṣṇa leaves both of them. Only with Yudhiṣṭhira does Kṛṣṇa affirm a *saṃvid* (covenant, engagement; 2.2.19c, 42.59a) in such a passage.

> aunt (Kuntī), the great-armed Janārdana set out surrounded by the cityfolk. The one (Arjuna) whose banner bore the best of monkeys, Sātyaki, the twin sons of Mādrī, Vidura of unfathomable intellect (*agādhabuddhir*),[106] and Bhīma himself who had an elephant king's stride followed Mādhava. Then, having made Vidura and all the heroic increasers of the Kuru kingdom return, Janārdana said to (his charioteer) Dāruka, "Urge the steeds to speed." . . . While Vārṣṇeya was proceeding to Dvāraka, O Bharata bull, those foe-scorchers with their retinue, having embraced [him], turned back. Again and again Phalguna [Arjuna] embraced Vārṣṇeya and as long as he was in eyes' range, he saw him again and again. And even so, Pārtha withdrew that sight fixed on Govinda with difficulty, and the unvanquished Kṛṣṇa [withdrew his sight with difficulty from Arjuna] as well. (14.51.52c–55, 52.1–3)

In that Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa will have no later farewells,[107] the scene anticipates Arjuna's forlorn grief for Kṛṣṇa when he finds he has left the world.[108] As they would be in later texts, such scenes play on the *bhakti* trope of *viraha* or "love in separation," and it is worth pointing out that Aśvaghoṣa, who knew both epics, already develops this idiom in his portrayal of the Buddha's Great Departure, as we shall see in chapter 13.

Hospitality and friendship are not the first things one thinks of regarding epic treatments of *dharma* and *bhakti*. But if a post-Mauryan Brahmanical ideology puts kingship front and center in both epics and *Manu*, and may even be said to be what their arguments are ostensibly about, this is not, in any of these texts, the grounds on which the argument was capable of being won. How one wishes to order society is one thing. How people get along is another. That was encouraged by invoking hospitality and friendship among the more open and flexible civilizational discourses and practices (another is the gift) familiar as custom throughout South Asian Ārya culture under endless local and regional variations. Indeed, these are discourses and practices that the Buddha himself

106. An epithet of Vidura also at 3.5.1, 5.30.29, and 5.81.48, and otherwise only of Vyāsa at 18.5.28.

107. There is no description of Kṛṣṇa's departure after returning for Yudhiṣṭhira's Aśvamedha; rather, the focus is on his description of Arjuna's return, looking gaunt, after a year of guarding the sacrificial horse. Kṛṣṇa is then among those welcoming Arjuna's return (14.89). See Hiltebeitel 2007*a*, 129–30.

108. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 85–91. Thirty-six years after the war, when, in accord with Gāndhārī's curse, all of Kṛṣṇa's clansmen slaughter each other in a brawl, before Kṛṣṇa ascends to heaven, he sends for Arjuna to protect the Yādava women. Arjuna arrives to see Dvārakā bereft and hears the wails of Kṛṣṇa's 16,000 wives (16.6.4–6). Kṛṣṇa's agonized father Vasudeva wonders how his son, the lord of the universe (*jagataḥ prabhuḥ*) who slew Kaṃsa, Ekalavya, Śiśupāla, and others, could have overlooked the slaughter of his own kinsmen, and tells Arjuna Kṛṣṇa's prediction that when Arjuna leaves Dvārakā, the ocean will deluge the city (7.9–17). Arjuna says he cannot look at the earth without Kṛṣṇa, and that his brothers and Draupadī feel the same. He also knows it is time for them all to move on (*saṃkramaṇa*), which can mean their passage together into the other world (8.1–4). With Kṛṣṇa gone, Arjuna then finds he has little power to protect the women.

relied on rather than criticized (as he did class), and could do no better than attempt to refine, as we saw in chapter 4. In reformulating hospitality and friendship as *dharma*, the *dharmasūtras* and *Manu* all sought to harmonize custom with Vedic practices and discourses, and so did the epics. But the epics could give this amalgam far more complex treatment by telling stories, among others, about hallowed ancient Ṛṣis and a god among men. In making this "swerve," they could develop it in narratives that were far more nuanced than incessant top-heavy reminders that the four social classes were created from Puruṣa.

For the most part, the basic vocabularies on friendship and hospitality are shared by the epics and the *dharma* literature. But the epics also innovate and archaize. Several Sanskrit words are often translated by "friend," three of which, for our purposes, are important to differentiate. *Mitra*, a Vedic term, has a primary meaning of "ally," but can also sometimes be translated more usefully as "friend." *Suhṛd*, which seems to be an epic coinage, literally means "goodhearted," "one with a good heart," and will be translated as "wellwisher," with all the ambiguity that the term can suggest, while its derivatives *sauhṛda/sauharda/sauhārda* can be translated "goodhearted." Most important, already mentioned in connection with Kṛṣṇa's special friendships with Draupadī and Arjuna and the only term I will translate as "friend," is *sakhi*, with its derivative *sakhya*, "friendship." It is important to note that *Mahābhārata* usages, especially, draw on Vedic precedents in giving this term two senses, which I call "pact friendship," as when Indra makes pacts with middle-Vedic demons such as Vṛtra and Namuci,[109] and "intimate friendship," as when Indra is helped to defeat Vṛtra by his "intimate friend" Viṣṇu (*índrasya yújya sákhā*) in *Ṛgveda* 1.22.19. Elsewhere (Hiltebeitel 2007*a*, 131), I have observed that Kṛṣṇa's friendship with Draupadī comes explicitly into play only in two scenes where her difficulties are colored by Vedic ritual injunctions: one, where her disrobing occurs in an inversion of the outcome of the ritually required dice match that should have ended the Rājasūya with Yudhiṣṭhira winning;[110] the other, in her underplayed fulfillment of the rule that the *mahiṣī* expose herself sexually to the sacrificed horse in the Aśvamedha. In each case, Kṛṣṇa intervenes in ways that lighten Draupadī's sexual humiliation. As the epic wife takes on roles as victim[111] within the arena of the great Vedic royal rites, she has this special *sakhi*

109. Garuḍa's friendship with Yayāti, mentioned in the previous section, is presumably of this kind, as are most interspecies friendships.

110. See van Buitenen 1972. Draupadī mentions her friendship with Kṛṣṇa thrice in this vein: at 2.62.9–11, 3.13.52–53, and 5.80.21–26. See Hiltebeitel 2007*a*, 127–28.

111. See Jamison 1996, 256 on the "sacrificed" sacrificer's wife playing the role of mediator between men and gods. I would suggest that this is the Vedic ground from which this aspect of Draupadī's relation to Kṛṣṇa is developed by the epic poets. Note that Vālmīki spares Sītā this indignity at Rāma's Aśvamedha by supplying Rāma with a golden statue of her in her stead.

to soften the complications she faces in what the text requires of her as it transposes these rituals from rules into narratives. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa's *sakhya* with Arjuna comes most explicitly into play in the *Bhagavad Gītā* as Arjuna faces ahead to the dilemmas of the "sacrifice of battle." In these moves from rite to narrative, it is as if the late Vedic slogan that "Viṣṇu is the sacrifice"[112] were reassuringly reenplotted as "where Kṛṣṇa is, there is *dharma*."

Meanwhile, as to hospitality, *atithi* is the main old word for "guest," and *ātithyam* for "hospitality," while there is no consistent term for host, that concept being more contextual. A host may be found in a house, a sacrifice, a performance, perhaps on a chariot, in a heart, etc. A few preepic usages are also interesting here. I believe there is something to be made of the fact that Viṣṇu is "the 'guest' par excellence" in the *ātitheṣṭi*, the *ātithya* or "guest offering rites" rites mentioned in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (3.4.1.1) and *Āpastamba Śrautasūtra* (10.30.1–31, 31.6–7), which "call the gods to mind," and to which Viṣṇu is "invited" by the *acchāvāka* or "inviter" priest, a deputy of the Hotṛ, by reciting *Ṛgveda* 1.154.1–3, praising Viṣṇu for "traversing three times," he whose "power . . . is like a terrifying, hungry, wild animal who dwells in the mountains (or in speech), the one of many hymns" in whose "three steps, all worlds abide" (Patton trans. 2005, 151). Used in simple *iṣṭi* or cake-offering rites, the *ātithyeṣṭi* can also be used "for the reception of Soma stalks, which are considered kingly, or a royal guest." According to Laurie Patton, the verses, according to the *Śaṅkhyāyana Śrautasūtra*, are also used during the cutting of the victim for Viṣṇu in the animal sacrifice (*paśuyajña*), while according to the *Ṛg Vidhāna* (1.136–37) they are to be recited for the adept "to attain *dharma*, intelligence (*jñānam*), sons, the increase of Brahmā, and the highest abode of eternal light" (2005, 9, 171–73). Also on guests, and suggestive in the same vein, is *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* 2.7.5–10:

> "Whether you hold them dear or not," it is stated, "guests lead you to heaven." When a man gives food in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, they constitute the three pressings of Soma; when he rises as his guest gets up to leave, it constitutes the final rite of the Soma sacrifice; when he addresses the guest with kind words, it constitutes the praise of the priestly fee; when he follows the guest as he leaves, it constitutes the Viṣṇu steps; and when he returns, it constitutes the final bath. (*ĀpDhS* 2.7.5–10)

It is interesting, in the light of passages on Kṛṣṇa's and Rāma's departures, that following the guest until he leaves should "constitute the Viṣṇu steps." *Āpastamba* is vivid in exemplifying *dharma* as hospitality:

112. *Yajño vai viṣṇuḥ* occurs frequently in the Brāhmaṇas; see Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 105, 293–94, 333, 356.

> A guest comes like a blazing fire. When someone has studied one branch from each of the Vedas in accordance with *dharma*, he is called a "Vedic scholar." When such a man comes to the home of a householder devoted to his *svadharma*—and he comes for no other purpose than to put *dharma* first—then he is called a "guest." By paying him homage, the householder obtains peace and heaven. (2.6.3–6)

The "blazing fire" like which a guest comes is "*agni*": it could be the god Agni visiting, or the opportunity to offer one of the five daily "great sacrifices" to feed an almsman. This brings us to a sort of touchstone-text: a surprising unit from the *Mahābhārata*'s 13th Book that closes King Yudhiṣṭhira's postwar instruction on the topic of "the Law of Giving" after the learned Bhīṣma has covered three prior *dharma* topics in Book 12—a curriculum that we shall revisit in chapter 13.

E. Ṛṣidharma

This touchstone is the "Dialogue Between Umā and Maheśvara" or *Umā-Maheśvara-Saṃvāda* (13.126–34, henceforth *UMS*). The expansive unit comes at one of several points of increasing "bonhomie" (as Bowles [2007, 387, 390] has put it) that can be traced through the entire arc of Yudhiṣṭhira's postwar instruction, and also one that could have something to do with a staggered but cumulatively increasing emphasis on *bhakti* through that four-part *dharma* instruction where Bhīṣma coordinates his lawgiving with *bhakti*.[113] It begins with Yudhiṣṭhira wanting to know more about Kṛṣṇa who has up to now been standing by, once again the listening guest, ever since Bhīṣma began his long postwar *dharma* talk on the subject of *Rājadharma*. Says Yudhiṣṭhira:

> If I am favored by you along with my brothers, O sinless one, you can speak to our question that I ask you, O king. This Nārāyaṇa, possessed of prosperity (*śrī*), is esteemed by all kings, and even he waits upon you with much respect and deference (*bahumānena praśrayeṇa ca*). In his presence, you can speak out of affection for me and for the benefit of all these lords of the earth, my brothers. (13.126.4–6)

Bhīṣma is overjoyed to speak on this subject, and tells one story about Kṛṣṇa that leads him to a second in which he quotes Nārada to narrate the actual *UMS*.

113. A possibility Zaehner (1963) and Brockington (2000*b*) raise in the *Mokṣadharma*, with its *Nārāyaṇīya* toward the end of that third *Śāntiparvan* anthology. Indeed, soon after the *UMS*, Bhīṣma, claiming that he is losing strength, directs Yudhiṣṭhira to ask a question about Brahmins to Kṛṣṇa himself, which turns into further questions about the irascible Ṛṣi Durvāsas that lead Kṛṣṇa to speak also about the greatness of Śiva (13.143–46)—before the dialogue returns for its windup with Bhīṣma. See Hiltebeitel 2005*d*, 260.

As one would expect, there are threads that link the two stories. The first tells how Kṛṣṇa once undertook a twelve-year vow at some mountain to obtain a son who would be his equal in vigor and would have half the energy of Śiva.[114]

Upon completing the consecration (*dīkṣā*), Kṛṣṇa was visited by Nārada, Vyāsa, and other important sages with their disciples—a veritable *Ṛṣisaṅgha* (13.126.49a), in fact—and received them with rites of hospitality (*atithisatkāram*) like those offered to the gods (13). The term *Ṛṣisaṅgha* is worth tracking along with its equivalent, the "host of Munis" or *Munigaṇa*. Once Kṛṣṇa had seated them all on gorgeous seats, they chatted amiably on matters of *dharma* until Kṛṣṇa released a fire from his mouth that burnt the entire mountain with its living creatures and came back to him like a docile disciple, after which he brought everything back to life. Noticing that his well-travelled visitors were surprised (*vismito*) and given to dismay (*vismaya*) at this inconceivable wonder (*adbhutam acintyam*), Kṛṣṇa explained that the fire contained his wrath and was his Vaiṣṇava *tejas* or "energy of Viṣṇu."[115] Then he asked them to tell him something highly wonderful (*āścaryaṃ paramaṃ kiṃcit*) that they had seen or heard on earth or in heaven, even while admitting that every such wonder is known to him, since what is "told by the pious and heard by the good is surely beneficial and lasts long on earth, like writing engraved on a mountain" (43)! Once the Ṛṣisaṅgha is finished glorifying (*vardhayantas*) and worshiping (*pūjayantas*) Madhusūdana with hymns of praise (46), the sages appoint Nārada to tell the sequel.

Nārada, now called "the wellwisher of Nārāyaṇa" (*nārāyaṇasuhṛd*; 13.127.1a), then leads us into an idyll of Śiva and Umā on Mount Himavat (1–39) that is interrupted when Umā covers Mahādeva's eyes in jest (26), leaving the world in darkness and distress until Śiva's third eye (30) opens and burns the mountain—which Umā then gets him to restore to its natural beauty. This inspires Umā to ask a series of questions on topics that intrigue her: first Śiva's third eye,[116] then his four faces, his bull, and his preference for the cremato-rium, which he explains by the delight he takes there with his ghostly host (*bhūtasaṅgha*, *bhūtagaṇa*; 128.18)—that leads Umā to ask next, for the benefit of

114. *Mbh* 13.126.33 and 45. It is not immediately clear who this son would be. As one learns in the *Upamanyu-Upākhyāna* (13.14–18), Jāmbavatī once reminded Kṛṣṇa, after twelve years, that she wished him to obtain an heroic son for her "like himself" (*ātmatulya*) by doing something similar to the twelve-year vow to Śiva he had done to obtain the eight sons of Rukmiṇī (13.14.12–16). Jāmbavatī, a relative of Jāmbavat, the king of bears in the *Rām*, is here "the daughter of the Indra of monkeys" (*kapīndraputrī*, 24b), and their son will be Sāmba, who would seem to be the likeliest candidate. Rukmiṇī's eight sons with Kṛṣṇa are listed here at verse 17. On Samba, see von Simson 2007.

115. According to Biardeau 1994, 63–88, the *avatāra* concept conceives Viṣṇu's incarnations to have not just a *dharma*-preserving aspect but, simultaneously, a *raudra* (terrifying) aspect that preserves *dharma* through Time's destruction and recreation (see Biardeau 1994, 63–88).

116. See O'Flaherty 1973, 248–51 on this myth and what seem to all be later variants (also 31–32, 190–91).

the hosts of Ṛṣis and Munis (*ṛṣisaṅgha, munigaṇa*) who attend them on Mount Himavat, what *dharma* is and how men learn of it (128.21–23), and then to ask about the *dharma* of the four social classes, and particularly that of Brahmins (13.128.29a). Śiva, who has just stated his rather capacious view of *dharma*'s many branches (*dharmo bahuśākhaḥ*; 128.27), focuses his reply on householder Brahmins as "gods on earth" (*bhūmidevāḥ*), for whom several of his prescriptions involve hospitality practices—honoring one's gurus and gods, and keeping houses properly rubbed (with cowdung and water) and fumigated with the smoke of clarified butter (128.30–34, 35–45)—related to the five daily *mahāyajñas* underscored in the *Gṛhyasūtras* and further developed especially as *dharma* in the *Dharmasūtras* and *Manu* (see chapter 5).

After hearing more about householders, however, Umā wants to know about the *dharma* of Ṛṣis or Munis themselves (using the compounds *ṛṣidharma* and *munidharma* at 13.129.32 and 34). Śiva, who delights not only in his hosts of ghosts but praises outlandish ascetics, now uses the verbal root √*uñch*, "to glean," several times to describe different types of "gleaners": Phenapas, "Foam-drinkers," who as it were "glean" or perhaps better "skim" their nourishment from the foam of waters left over from sacrifices (36–38b); Cakracaras who practice the *dharma* of compassion (*dayādharma*), rove in the world of the gods (*devaloka*), and "glean" their food from moonbeams (43–44, 48); others who live with their wives, practice the five *mahāyajñas*, and "glean" their nourishment from the flames of their fires; and thumb-sized Vālakhilyas who live in the solar disc, wear deer skins or tree bark, follow the actual *uñcha* or "gleaning" mode of life by subsisting like birds on grains left in the fields (*uñcham uñchanti dharmajñāḥ śākunīṃ vṛttim āsthitāḥ*), and "attain equity with the gods in accomplishing the purpose of the gods' work (*te suraiḥ samatāṃ yānti surakāryārthasiddhaye*)" (129.39c–42b). By now we know enough about the phrase *surakārya*, "the work of the gods," to know why these gleaners are on a plane of "equity with the gods."

It is with reference to this varied "gleaning" ideal that Śiva then summarizes the *dharma* of Ṛṣis and Munis in the passage that should interest us most:

> In all the *Ṛṣidharmas*, selves are to be conquered, sense faculties are conquered. Afterwards, desire and wrath are then to be conquered, so I think. Maintaining the Agnihotra, sitting for the Dharmarātri,[117] Soma sacrifice, assenting to approval, and [offering] honoraria at sacrifices as the fifth, [plus] the daily *dharma* of sacrificial acts:

117. I do not know what this is. Ganguli [1884–96] 1970, 11: 296 has: "occupying a fixed seat employing oneself the while in the sacrifice called Dharmaratri." A nightlong vow is probably suggested. Though a Bengali, he seems not to have been tempted to relate it to a Dharmagajan. On this Dharma cult, see chapter 9 § D.2.b.

> pleasure in the worship of Pitṛs and gods and hospitality to all—[these] are to be done with food acquired by gleaning. Turning away from food prepared with cows' milk and taking pleasure in lying on the bare ground, yoga, enjoying vegetables and leaves, eating fruits and roots, partaking of wind, water, and duck weed—these are some observances of the Ṛṣis by which they conquer the way of the unsubjugated. When there is no more smoke, when the pestle is set down, when there are no more coals, when the people have eaten their meal, when the handing around of vessels is over, when the time for asking alms has passed by, surely [it is then, still] longing for a guest, [that] one eats the food left over. Delighted by the *dharma* of truth, patient, he is yoked to the *Munidharma*. Not arrogant or proud, the one who is neither heedless nor surprised (*vismita*), a friend alike to friend and foe, he is the foremost knower of *dharma*.[118]

As mentioned in chapter 4, the basic hospitality practice of waiting before one begs for food until the four (or fewer) signals of the settling or setting down of the pestle, smoke, embers, and plates occurs as a *dharmaśāstra* adage in *Baudhāyana* (*BDhS* 2.11.22), *Vasiṣṭha* (*VDhS* 10.7–8), *Manu* (6.56), and in the *Mahābhārata* (at 12.9.22), where Yudhiṣṭhira tells how he would like to be a carefree mendicant just after the war. It is also mentioned in the *Aggañña Sutta*, where the Buddha, offering a sly etymology for Brahmins by punning on the words linking fire-tending and meditation, speaks of the prelapsarian practices of the original good Brahmins:

> They made leaf-huts in the forest and meditated in them; without coals or smoke (from a cooking fire), pestle set down, they went into villages, towns and royal cities in search of food, in the evening for their evening meal, and in the morning for their morning meal. (*DN* 27.22)

118. *Mbh* 13.129.48–55: *sarveṣv evarṣidharmeṣu jeyātmā jitendriyaḥ/ kāmakrodhau tataḥ paścāj jetavyāv iti me matiḥ// agnihotraparispando dharmarātrisamāsanam/ somayajñābhyanujñānam pañcamī yajnadakṣiṇā// nityaṃ yajñakriyādharmaḥ pitṛdevārcane ratiḥ/ sarvātithyaṃ ca kartavyam annenoñchārjitena vai// nivṛttir upabhogasya gorasānāṃ ca vai ratiḥ/ sthaṇḍile śayanaṃ yogaḥ śākaparṇaniṣevaṇam// phalamūlāśanaṃ vāyur āpaḥ śaivalabhakṣaṇam/ ṛṣīṇāṃ niyamā hyete yair jayantyajitāṃ gatim// vidhūme nyastamusale vyaṅgāre bhuktavajjane/ atītapātrasaṃcāre kāle vigatabhaikṣake// atithiṃ kāṅkṣamāṇo vai śēṣānnakṛtabhojanaḥ/ satyadharmaratiḥ kṣanto munidharmeṇa yujyate// na stambhī na ca mānī yo na pramatto na vismitaḥ/ mitrāmitrasamo maitro yaḥ sa dharmaviduttamaḥ*. For the most evocative lines in verses 53–54b, Ganguli ([1884–96] 1970, 11: 297) has this lovely evocation of a life he surely knew better than I: "When the smoke has ceased to curl upwards from a house, when the husking machine has ceased to ply, when all the inmates have taken their food, when dishes are no longer carried from room to room, when mendicants have ceased to walk the streets, it is then that a man desiring to have a guest (but finding his desire ungratified), should eat what remnant of food may still occur in his house."

Here it seems to be a question of putting these things aside oneself before going begging. Except for Śiva's usage, everyone else describes when a begging guest gets to eat, not when the host waiting for a guest gets to eat. Achieving a startling effect, the *Mahābhārata* has transformed the adage to describe *Ṛṣidharma* as what householder hosts do themselves, longing for a guest to honor with their meager fare.

Now it is not surprising that Umā and Śiva, surrounded in their Himalayan retreat by hosts of ghosts and eccentric sages, would share an interest in unusual and surprising *dharmas*. But the term *Ṛṣidharma* was a surprise to me, as I had never even considered that there was such a thing.[119] One does not hear about *Ṛṣidharma* or *Munidharma* from *Manu*, even though the celestial sages form the first audience of the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra*. Nor, even though we may have found Kṛṣṇa referring to it indirectly when he tells Arjuna about Munis who "came to have the same nature (*dharma*) as me" and who "even at the Creation do not take birth, and are not disturbed at the Dissolution" (*BhG* 14,2), it is not the sort of thing one would have expected in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.[120] It shows the value of having more than one god's opinion about *dharma*. Indeed, Śiva will round off his dialogue with Umā by getting her reply to *his* question about the *dharma* of women (134.1–29).

The terms *Ṛṣidharma* and *Munidharma* occur five and four times respectively in the *Mahābhārata*, all but two of them in the *UMS*, and all of them in Bhīṣma's postwar instructions.[121] Clearly, Mārkaṇḍeya and Nārada exemplify this "*dharma* of the Sages": the first by surviving and witnessing the Dissolution; the latter by narrating Śiva and Pārvatī's dialogue in the *UMS*, where the terms are most fully developed. Neither term is found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Yet *Ṛṣidharma* is all over the place in both epics, and has much to do in them not only with *dharma* but also with *bhakti*. As the quote from Śiva would suggest, it has to do with hospitality and friendship; and if gleaner Ṛṣis "attain equity with the gods in accomplishing the purpose of the gods' work" (13.129.39c–42b), we can see that Ṛṣidharma will be consonant with the divine plan. One finds it above all in the Ṛṣis the heroes meet. But let us begin by noting some of the ways it can be appreciated straight from this passage. Most crucial is the very idea that there is a *Ṛṣidharma* or *Munidharma* that is of interest to such a grand audience as a

119. Bronkhorst 2007, 81 cites a *Mokṣadharma* passage that mentions "the Dharma of Ṛṣis," but does not pursue the term. The passage (12.185.1.1–2), in prose, describes the ascetic regimes of "forest-dwellers [who] follow the Ṛṣidharma" (*vānaprasthaḥ khalv ṛṣidharmamanusarantaḥ*; 1.1a).

120. Yudhiṣṭhira seems unfazed by it, and formulates his next question on the One God, whom Bhīṣma identifies as Vāsudeva, and the highest *dharma* (13.135.2–3), which turns out to be the recitation of Viṣṇu's thousand names.

121. All but two are in our current dialogue—those at 12.61.10, where Bhīṣma speaks of "the very difficult householder *dharma* seen as *Munidharma*" and at 12.185.1–2, as mentioned two notes above.

company of Ṛṣis or a host of Munis. I will first deal with practitioners of *Ṛṣidharma*—at least as Śiva describes them—and then turn to the topic of Ṛṣi companies as audiences.

It seems that despite their elemental modes of subsistence and access to higher worlds, the gleaners of the various types who practice *Ṛṣi-* or *Muni-dharma* still lead earthly lives, and would *not* be among those in the Ṛṣi companies or Muni hosts who attend Umā and Śiva's conversation or come in conclave to honor Kṛṣṇa. As one can gather from *Baudhāyana* and *Manu*, the gleaner's mode of life is an ideal for real people that in some sense surpasses the categories of Class and Life-stage *Dharma*, and has nothing to do with class-mixing.[122] To correct some misconceptions, gleaners are not necessarily Brahmins, and do not belong in a statement about Brahmins "forced" by *varṇasaṃkara* "to subsist by performing military roles, shopkeeping or even engaging in agriculture—or they are reduced to 'gleaning' and often starve. The king who allows such degradations to occur is said to be seriously deficient" (Fitzgerald 2006*a*, 275). As *Manu* says, although a king "may eke out a living by gleaning (*śīloñchena*), his fame spreads in the world like a drop of oil on water" (7.33). But as *Manu* indicates,[123] it is mainly Brahmins who would have this high ideal: that of a sort of liminal householder life somewhere between the second and third *āśrama*, enjoined to perform the five *mahāyajñas* but with what seems the absolute minimum that its practitioners might offer to their own families, not to mention guests. Among those who are mentioned by Śiva, the foam-, moonbeam-, and fire-gleaners could be forest-dwellers, but the actual grain-gleaners would have to live near agricultural fields even if they are dressed in leaves and tree bark. It is indeed a high ideal in the *Mahābhārata*, where it is exalted in such terms as these to Yudhiṣṭhira in several *upākhyānas*, where a god in disguise (his father Dharma [see chapter 9]), or a saint (that irascible clone of Śiva, Durvāsas), might come as a hungry guest to test its practitioner. Yet one notices that Yudhiṣṭhira and his companions only hear about such gleaners and never meet one, especially in the forest. Clearly the ideal is precisely this: to live out daily, as Śiva says, the challenges of hospitality and friendship to all with patience in a world of marvels, indeed, where one is oneself one of the marvels, but as one who is surprised by nothing. It remains a living ideal in India,

122. After telling Yudhiṣṭhira the *Uñchvṛttyupākhyāna*, in which the snake Padmanābha praises a perfected Muni who had gone to heaven by undertaking this practice, Bhīṣma says it is "best *dharma* for those in the life-stages" (*dharmamāśramiṇāṃ śreṣṭham*; 12.340.1), possibly implying that it can be practiced in any of the four.

123. See *M* 4.7 ("the length of time one stores up grain in advance shows the superiority of those who store the least"); cf. 3.100; 4.4–10 (limiting the daily sacrifices, which, according to 6.5, the forest hermit should perform). Cf. chapter 4 §§ C.1 and C.3 on the Buddhist monastic rule of limiting food storage to seven days.

as I learned from my friend T. P. Mahadevan, who grew up in Kerala. Whether his mother had ever seen one or not, she thought there was no one finer than an *uñchavṛtti* Brahmin who (quoting Thennilapuram Mahadevan, e-mail, July 7, 2006) lived a life beyond "the taint of the *dakṣiṇā* that regular Vaidika Brahmins had to endure" and could rise "above it all, a liberated soul squaring the circle, as it were, in the world but out of it."

As to the audiences of more celestial Ṛṣis and Munis such as the two Ṛṣisaṅghas that attend to Kṛṣṇa and to Umā and Śiva, here we meet variants of the widest audiences of the two epics and *Manu*: in the *Mahābhārata*, the stellar Naimiṣa Forest Ṛṣis who hear the epic from the bard Ugraśravas in its outer frame; the celestial Ṛṣis who come *to* the earthly Naimiṣa Forest from Brahmaloka with Brahmā's permission to hear the rest of the *Rāmāyaṇa* from Kuśa and Lava once Sītā has descended into the earth;[124] and the celestial Seers who listen to Manu's son Bhṛgu recite the *Manusmṛti*. We also find another variation in the last verses of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, a text whose chronological relation to the epics and *Manu* is perhaps too close to call:[125]

> By the power of his austerities and by the grace of God (*devaprasādād*), the wise Śvetāśvatara first came to know *brahman* and then proclaimed it to those who had passed beyond their order[s] of life (*atyāśramibhyaḥ*) as the highest means of purification that brings delight (*juṣṭam*) to the company of seers (*ṛṣisaṅgha*).
>
> This supreme secret was proclaimed during a former age (*purākalpe*) in the Vedānta. One should not disclose it to a person who is not of a tranquil disposition, or who is not one's son or pupil.
>
> Only in a man who has the deepest love for god (*yasya deve parā bhaktir*), and who shows the same love for his teacher as towards God, do these points (*arthāḥ*) declared by the Noble One shine forth (*prakaśante mahātmanaḥ*, which is repeated). (*ŚU* 6.21–23, Olivelle trans. 1998, 422–23)

Here we meet the term Ṛṣisaṅgha explicitly, and again with some differentiation made between this "company of seers" and those in whom they delight who have "passed beyond their order(s) of life as the highest means of purification." It is not certain whether the expression translated here as "beyond their order(s)

124. *Rām* 7, Appendix I, No. 13, lines 21–49. Although the Baroda CE rejects this *sarga*, it does so only on the grounds that without it "the continuity of the narration . . . is not hampered and appears in a better order" (Shah 1975, 29).

125. I would not go as far as Oberlies, who argues that the *Śvetāśvatara* is from around 0–200 A.D. (1997, 86; 1988, 57–59), though he may be right (even if I doubt it) that it is younger than the *BhG*. Cf. Olivelle 1996, 252: "Its thought and vocabulary are close to that other theistic document, the *Bhagavad Gītā*."

of life" refers to all four life-stages or just the householder stage, but, given the liminal state of certain highly purified gleaners, I think most translators are right to think of the former.[126]

So what are these high sagely audiences that take such delights: in this Upaniṣad, a delight in those who have "passed beyond their order(s) of life as the highest means of purification" from receiving a "supreme secret proclaimed during a former aeon"—probably one of the earliest usages of *kalpa* in a Brahmanical text[127]—that now "shines forth" to them after it was disclosed as *brahman* to Śvetāśvatara by the grace of God; in the *Gītā*, in obtaining from Kṛṣṇa, "the supreme knowledge of knowledges knowing which all the Munis have gone from this world to supreme success," having attained the "same nature as me" such that they are unaffected through Dissolutions and Creations; in our current example from the *Mahābhārata*, a delight in pralayic stories that provoke wonder and surprise? What is interesting is how these *bhakti* texts do something *bhakti* is famous for: constructing community, and with it audience. I think *Manu* shows familiarity with this novel textual practice, without mentioning the term *saṅgha*, to give his unbudging orthodoxy some similar kind of constituency. But the term has this cachet elsewhere. The use of the term *Ṛṣisaṅgha* would also have counterparts in the wider sense of the Buddhist second refuge "in the Sangha," which is also and from the first an audience for texts, and in the use of the same term for the first audiences of Tamil literature.

These universal listeners are not only the greatest of sages, enough of them Vedic to make that part of their aura, but a model audience that listens for and with a carefully constructed "us." Indeed, in very broad terms, we can say that they are the hosts of the texts, and in the *Mahābhārata*, sometimes the hosts of subunits such as the *UMS*, and of course not just hosts of the texts but of their readers since they set the model for receiving the texts into human lives and homes and open questions of interpretation just by their overhearing presence, not to mention specific interventions where they "do the gods' work." In the *UMS*, the first thing to notice is that first Kṛṣṇa and then Śiva and Umā are hosts to two successive Ṛṣisaṅghas. In the first case, Kṛṣṇa registers the

126. Given the liminal state of certain highly purified gleaners, I am not sure that Olivelle is right to discount the assumption of "many scholars . . . that the expression *atyāśramibhyaj* . . . refers to those who had passed beyond the four stages of life known as the *āśramas*," maintaining, on the contrary, that "*āśrama* here means just the householder life and the expression refers to ascetics who have moved beyond the householder life" (1998, 628 n.). As Olivelle indicates, there *are* later instances where term *atyāśramin* does hold "the possibility of living beyond the *āśramas*." In any case, the closing *ŚU* passage makes the differentiation mentioned, and might provide an early instance of this later *āśrama*-transcending meaning by its *bhakti* context, which is similar to that in the *UMS*—for one thing, in stressing "the highest means of purification."

127. Cf. two notes above: the *ŚU* may be no earlier than the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Olivelle, as quoted, translates it as "age" rather than "aeon," and, as often in the *Mahābhārata*, it is indeed hard to know what is meant. See chapter 6.

Ṛṣisaṅgha's surprise at the miracle of the fire from his mouth, and encourages their telling him a wondrous story that will last "long on earth, like writing engraved on a mountain" (*śaile lekhyam ivārpitam*; 43d)—an interesting juxtaposition of oral and written modes of communication, and reminiscent of Hanumān's parting words to Rāma, stressing solely orality: "As long as I hear *Rāma-kathā* on the face of the earth, so long will my breaths reside in my body" (*Rām* 7.39.16).[128] Like Hanumān, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma are both hosts to stories: in Kṛṣṇa's case, one about Umā and Śiva; in Rāma's, his own. But Kṛṣṇa, as guest and host, listens along with the Pāṇḍavas to countless other stories, including others too about himself, as we noticed him doing earlier in this chapter (see § C) when Mārkaṇḍeya sprang the revelation that the child he had just described surviving the cosmic dissolution was none other than this Kṛṣṇa in the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī's very company, "your ally Janārdana, . . . who sits here as though at play," and told the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī they should "go to him for refuge" (3.187.50–53). From the standpoint of the *UMS*, the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī have now finally already taken refuge in Kṛṣṇa by becoming "dedicated to Nārāyaṇa" after hearing the White Island story in the *Nārāyaṇīya*,[129] again, with Kṛṣṇa-Janārdana present and listening. Meanwhile, in the case of Umā and Śiva, it is their solicitation of their own attendant Ṛṣisaṅgha that spurs Umā, once she has satisfied her curiosity about Śiva's third eye, four faces, Nandin, and Bhūtas, to ask what *dharma* is and how men learn of it (*Mbh* 13.128.21–23), which leads on to her question about Ṛṣidharma.

These highly reflexive and nearly metatextual considerations may seem only to be connecting the dots between passages that have long been considered late, and moreover, pointing us away from the two Sanskrit epics' main stories. But that is only if we grant those isolative premises. As I have said, Ṛṣidharma is all over the place in both texts, where it has very much to do not only with hospitality and friendship but with a kind of intimacy and complicity in these matters that is fostered by the texts themselves, and indeed by their poets under the noms de plume of their Ṛṣi authors. Vālmīki composes the *Rāmāyaṇa* and imparts it to Kuśa and Lava at his *āśrama* as nothing less than the host of Sītā, and he comes with the twins to have them sing the *Rāmāyaṇa* at Rāma's Aśvamedha as a guest of Rāma, and then arrives there again with Sītā for her final ordeal. Vyāsa is time and again a surprise visitor and occasional host, and a nearly but not entirely silent and definitely honored guest as

128. On orality and writing, see Hiltebeitel 2005*c*. "Writing on a mountain" does, of course, suggest a post-Aśokan verse, but that dating would surprise no one.

129. "Having heard this best of narratives, O Janamejaya, King Dharma and all his brothers became dedicated to Nārāyaṇa" (12.326.121). See chapter 6 § B.

a *sadasya* at Janamejaya's snake sacrifice where he is present as a great-great-great grandfather of that host for the inner frame recital of his own composition.[130] If Vālmīki is intimate with his characters not only through his proximity to Sītā but through a boon from Brahmā, Vyāsa is still more intimate—literally so with two Kuru queens and one of their maidservants, and also with his characters' thoughts, beginning with those of his mother, and including those of Kṛṣṇa (Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 32–91). Through these author-sages we are party to thoughts of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa and the generations of heroes and heroines who share their time on earth. Yet paradoxically, this intimacy and complicity gifted by the poets to readers is nurtured in our separation, in that these gods, heroes, and heroines lived in another time, and they are "not like us."

F. Rāma and Kṛṣṇa as Guests, Hosts, and Friends

Let us then take a closer look at a few scenes that show the work of the poets in creating this intimate camaraderie around hospitality and friendship. I focus on examples of each from each epic, noting that hospitality and friendship also often imply each other, and that both always imply separation. Each also implies a politics of *bhakti* that maps differently in each epic: as a master–servant dialectic in the *Rāmāyaṇa* centered on an exaltation of the figure of the divine king; and, in the *Mahābhārata*, a politics of friend and foe. Again, while never forgetting *varṇāśramadharma* and indeed reinforcing it, these instances also open on to matters that play on its interstices and extend well beyond its limits.

If one looks at the *Rāmāyaṇa* in terms of hospitality for and by Rāma, there are two broad phases. In the first five Books one meets Rāma mostly as a guest of forest sages, and as one who refuses to be hosted in the monkey capital of Kiṣkindhā. But the tables begin to turn in Book 6, where he gives refuge to the Rākṣasa Vibhīṣaṇa, a "good demon" who is a younger brother of Rāvaṇa. And they are fully turned in Book 7 where, as king, Rāma finally gets to host just about everybody—Rākṣasas, Monkeys, Ṛṣis, and kings—more than once, including, as noted, Vālmīki, and ultimately even that intemperate hungry sage Durvāsas whose demand for food signals Rāma and his brothers' last days.

The first phase is interesting because it brings a neo-Vedic variety of Ṛṣidharma right into the heart of the story to mark Rāma's path and to provide

130. As we saw in § A of this chapter, the *Harivaṃśa* picks up on this presence to give Janamejaya the opportunity to ask his last questions directly to Vyāsa. On his presence there in the *Mahābhārata*, see chapter 6 § B (n. 33); Hiltebeitel 2006*a*, 245–49.

him and his brothers,[131] and soon enough Sītā as well, with mentoring or guidance. This is Vālmīki's idea, for only one of the great Vedic Ṛṣis Rāma encounters, Vasiṣṭha, appears in the *Mahābhārata*'s *Rāmopākhyāna*. Moreover, one of them, Agastya, is added to complete a relay system that overlaps with three Ṛṣi groupings that Vālmīki would have known: the set of Seven Ṛṣis, whom the *Mahābhārata* knows by now as the stars of the Big Dipper,[132] plus Agastya as the southern star Canopus; the same set as the eight eponymous ancestors to whom all Brahmins trace their primary lineages or *gotras*;[133] and the group of eponymous Ṛṣi-poets of the oldest Family Books of the *Ṛgveda*.[134] Vālmīki thereby presents himself and Rāma not only as contemporaries of the most hallowed Vedic Ṛṣis; he maps these Ṛṣis from Ayodhyā deep into the forests of India to guide Rāma from conception to the abduction of Sītā. For Agastya, after hosting them, directs Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Sītā further south to the place where Sītā will be abducted.[135] Four of these Ṛṣis host Rāma in their hermitages: Viśvāmitra, Bharadvāja, Atri, and Agastya; and he goes with Viśvāmitra to the former hermitage of Gautama to hear the story of Gautama's wife Ahalyā, who provides Rāma and company hospitality (*ātithyam*; 1.47.18ab) before he reunites the couple after a long estrangement. Bharadvāja (2.48.13) and Agastya explicitly provide Rāma hospitality, each calling him their "beloved guest" (*priya-atithi*), as does another forest Ṛṣi named Śarabhaṅga (3.4.25d).[136] The most telling instance is the last, where Agastya says to Rāma with joined hands:

> King of the whole world, one who fares in *dharma*, a great chariot warrior, a man offered reverence and esteem, you have come as my beloved guest. (3.11.27)

131. Lakṣmaṇa is usually with Rāma when Rāma meets them; Bharata—once Rāma has gone into exile with Lakṣmaṇa—meets Bharadvāja (ca. 2.66–80) independently, and so too deals independently with Vasiṣṭha (2.107.6a–c; see also 2.96.24–29). Śatrughna also meets with Vālmīki in a passage that the Critical Edition rejects even though it appears in all the manuscripts collated, when he stops at Vālmīki's hermitage, hears the twins' elegant recitals, and promises that he and his army will keep their birth secret from Rāma (7, Appendix 1, No. 9; Shah 1975, 26–27).

132. The Seven Ṛṣis as Big Dipper are Viśvāmitra, Gautama, Atri, Bharadvāja, Vasiṣṭha, Jamadagni (Rāma Jāmadagnya's *deceased* father), and Kaśyapa, ancestor of Ṛśyaśṛṅga who oversees Rāma's conception. The seven are also listed as the composers of *Ṛgveda* 9.67 and 10.137.

133. The same seven as in the previous note, plus Agastya. See Hiltebeitel 1977 for discussion of all these sets.

134. See chapter 3 § B: Viśvāmitra of Book 3; Gautama of Book 4; Atri of Book 5; Bharadvāja of Book 6; and Vasiṣṭha of Book 7; plus Rāma Jāmadagnya, descended from Bhṛgu and the Bhṛgu poets of Book 2.

135. See Hiltebeitel 2009*a*, and for some discussion of these scenes and *Rāmāyaṇa* hospitality practices, Brockington and Brockington 2006, xvi, 381–83.

136. The phrase has ordinary uses: Daśaratha welcomes Bharata's maternal uncle Yudhājit with it (1.72.6), and uses it to describe how the boy he killed by accident would come "like a welcome guest" (*priyam ivātithim*) to feed his parents (2.58.28). But this second usage also reflects back on how Daśaratha yearns for the departed Rāma. As we shall see, *priyātithi* is also used when the residents of Ayodhyā return to the city and lament the "beloved guest" (!) who has left for exile (2.42.34).

As with the earthly gleaners described by Śiva, these *Rāmāyaṇa* sages do the gods' work and would seem to have more than an inkling of what it is. Once Agastya recognizes his "beloved guest" even in exile as the king of the world, he gives Rāma a bow of Viṣṇu (3.11.29–32). When Sītā is soon abducted, Brahmā speaks of it as something that had to be done and the Daṇḍaka Forest Ṛṣis are "thrilled and agitated" (*prahṛṣṭā vyathitāś ca*) at the sight (3.50.10–11).[137]

As to friendship in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is the second book that brings the subject to the fore. Here we meet the first articulation of *sakhi* as a "friend to master" (*sakhi* to *bhartṛ*) relation specifically focused on Rāma in his dealings with Guha, a low caste or "tribal" Niṣāda.[138] Otherwise, as Rāma emerges into view in his court and palace life as he is about to be made heir-apparent, *sakhi* is never used for any relation he has with anyone else in this Book. In departing Ayodhyā, Rāma leaves no friends behind—that is, *sakhi* friends. What he leaves behind are wellwishers, *suhṛds*. While *suhṛd* is used fairly frequently, what is noteworthy is that although Rāma has *suhṛds*, when they are around him they are impersonal, never named.[139] For example, "As for Rāma's wellwishers, they were all bewildered: crushed by the weight of their grief, they could not rise from where they had fallen" (2.36.16). The wellwishers are last in the run of those bidding Rāma adieu, mentioned just before the city, "Ayodhyā, with all its hosts of soldiers and herds and horses and elephants . . ."—after which Rāma disappears from the sight of those remaining in the capital (36.17–37.2). After following Rāma's departure as far as they could, they would be among the residents who return to the city and say, "Every hill and grove Rāma visits will treat him as a beloved guest (*priyātithi*) and not fail to accord him hospitality" (2.42.34). Only when Sītā is abducted does Rāma begin to make *sakhi* friends among animals, most notably with Sugrīva,[140] through whom he also inspires

137. As mentioned above in § A. I believe this is right, although Pollock 1991, 196 has "shuddered and trembled to see" here. Although Pollock 1984 worked out the implications of the boon to Rāvaṇa that requires Rāma not to know his divinity until he has killed him, he does not see them in passages like this.

138. See 2.44.9b and **14a**; 2.78.**5ab** and 11cd; 79.2b, 80.7a, 81.16b: Guha is friend and Rāma specifically master in the second and third of these citations. Ekalavya is also a Niṣāda; see chapter 9.

139. See *Rām* 2.3.29ab; 2.5.12ab; 2.15.1, 4ab and 9ab; 2.16.55 and 61; 2.31.4 (he has taken leave here of "all his *suhṛds*"). Lakṣmaṇa likewise has his *suhṛjjana*, a depersonalized throng of wellwishers (28.11cd and 15ab), whom Rāma bids him say adieu to once Lakṣmaṇa has pleased Rāma with his detailed promise of services to him and Sītā in the forest. Bharata, however, at least in Rājagha among his mother's people of Kekaya, has *sakhi*s who can speak to him as his *suhṛd*s (2.63.5–7). This is no doubt to nuance the fact that these "friends of Bharata" are still, as far as the narrative has developed, potential rivals of Rāma, for Bharata's own loyalty to (and *saubhrātra* with) Rāma is being at this point still held up to question.

140. Beginning with the vulture Jaṭāyus and later including Jaṭāyus's brother Saṃpāti, both former *sakhis* of Daśaratha (3.13.41; 4.55.20; 56 9 and 12). As with Sugrīva, with whom Rāma "makes friends" on the advice of Kabandha (see 3.67.30; 4.5.7; 4.8.2d and 39cd; cf. the *Rāmopākhyana*'s usages at *Mbh* 3.263.39d; 264.11c, 57a), *sakhi* at first means "pact" friend, but in Sugrīva's case it becomes also "intimate." On other terms (notably *vayasya*, used artfully by Vālmīki for this budding friendship with Sugrīva, but *not* used in the *Rāmopākhyāna*), see Hiltebeitel 2009*a* and chapter 9 § D.1.

the devotion of Hanumān. As befits the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s master–servant politics, it restricts the role of friend to low-status subordinates, and separates the roles of friend and devotee, leaving the one no less a servant than the other.

As to the *Mahābhārata*, scenes of friendship and hospitality are more numerous and also harder to separate from each other. Things are also more complex in other ways. As with Rāma, one would want to track the hosting and guesting relation between Kṛṣṇa and the Ṛṣis and the semantics of Kṛṣṇa's "friendship" throughout the text as they relate to movements within and away from the central kingdom and its capital, or in the *Mahābhārata*'s case, its *two* capitals. Indeed, even before Kṛṣṇa is mentioned in the action, we saw how the Mount Śataśṛṅga Ṛṣis, all cued to the divine plan, and some of them, at least, celestial, brought the Pāṇḍava boys to Hāstinapura (see chapter 8 §§ E–H). With Kṛṣṇa then coming into the action, there are many scenes with *bhakti* overtones that clearly relate hospitality and friendship to *dharma*: some outside Kuru land, some in it, but all implying Kṛṣṇa's involvement with the Kurus. Kṛṣṇa welcomes Arjuna at Dvārakā by helping him abduct his sister Subhadrā (*Mbh* 1.211–12), who will be the mother of Abhimanyu through whom the lunar dynasty will have continuity into the Kali *yuga*. With his plan to recover the "middle country" (*avanīṃ madhyamām*) from Jarāsaṃdha's universal sovereignty (*sāṃrājyam*) (2.13.7–8), Kṛṣṇa breaches Jarāsaṃdha's hospitality at Magadha (see chapter 13). Bhīṣma selects Kṛṣṇa to receive the "guest-gift" (*arghya*) at Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya because he is the Supreme Person (*puruṣottama*; 2.42.24d). When Nārada leads the Ṛṣis there in time for the guest-gift (2.33.1–21), he perceives there, in the very midst of the Pāṇḍava–Kuru hall at Indraprastha, that Hari Nārāyaṇa who has "become man" and is the lord praised by sacrifices (20) will lead those assembled to their doom (2.34–42). Kṛṣṇa is then absent at the dice match in the Kuru court at Hāstinapura, where Draupadī is staked and miraculously saved from the attempt to disrobe her.[141] As events lead on to war, in a scene that sets the stage for Kurukṣetra itself, Kṛṣṇa awakens at Dvārakā to find Arjuna and Duryodhana seeking boons from him. Duryodhana claims that Kṛṣṇa has an equal friendship (*samam . . . sakhyam*) and relationship (*sambandhakam*) to both himself and Arjuna (5.7.10), which Kṛṣṇa (that "friend alike to friend and foe") does not deny, but rather devises the order of choosing so that Arjuna gets the first choice between Kṛṣṇa as a noncombatant charioteer

141. For what must remain for now my best attempts to understand that scene, see Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 86–101 on Kṛṣṇa's absence from the dice match as structured by "the epic scenarists" (93) to carry forward the divine plan, and 2001*a*, 241–59, leaving open the question of whether Draupadī at least called on Kṛṣṇa in his absence, during her scene of distress, since both of them refer to her doing so later (5.58.21; 80.23–26). See now Bhattacharya 2009: despite recognizing evidence to the contrary outside the episode at *Mbh* 9.58.10, which he has no good explanation for (96), he wishes to argue that Draupadī was never disrobed at all.

(which Arjuna chooses) and a whole army division of Kṛṣṇa's Nārāyaṇa Gopā warriors (which seems to content Duryodhana).[142]

Unlike Rāma, Kṛṣṇa is never a king with a need for subordinates or grandiose hosting obligations;[143] and he tends not to play things straight. Noting again that many of these scenes, and others, do not allow us to forget that Kṛṣṇa is the special friend of Arjuna and Draupadī, I will choose examples from Kṛṣṇa's embassy to the Kuru court in Book 5. For this, we will need to remember that Karṇa is the Pāṇḍavas' arch foe, and recall that Vidura incarnates Dharma and often speaks for *dharma* in the Kuru court.

Here, for once, as noted above where Yudhiṣṭhira and Vidura both warn Kṛṣṇa about "descending" into the enemy camp, Kṛṣṇa is being hosted by the Kauravas. The lengthy sub-book on Kṛṣṇa's embassy—"The Coming of the Lord" (*Bhagavatyānaparvan*)—is filled with moments that could illustrate our points, including Dhṛtarāṣṭra's raptures at the thought of giving Kṛṣṇa fabulous gifts and displays of welcome (5.84); Vidura's advice that it would be enough for Dhṛtarāṣṭra to give Kṛṣṇa "a beloved's hospitality" (5.85.14) as he deserves—just a jar of water to drink, water to wash his feet, an inquiry into his health, and what he (supposedly) really wants, peace (85.13–16); and Duryodhana's plans to capture Kṛṣṇa (86.13). But let us focus in on the Ṛṣis. As Kṛṣṇa leaves the Pāṇḍavas' camp, various birds circle auspiciously above him, and then some of the great Brahma-Ṛṣis and Divine Ṛṣis (*brahmadevarṣayaḥ*)—Vasiṣṭha, Nārada, Vālmīkā (*sic*), and Bhṛgu among them—circumambulate him and perform smokeless rites with mantras on his behalf (5.81.26–29). We do not hear where they have come from until he has set out:

> Along the path (*adhvani*) Keśava of strong arms saw the Ṛṣis blazing with brahmic luster, who stood on both sides of the road (*sthitān ubhayataḥ pathi*). Quickly descending from the chariot (*avatīrya rathāt*), Janārdana, having bowed, honoring all these Ṛṣis duly, said, "Is good health in the worlds, is *dharma* observed, do the other three *varṇas* abide under the Brahmins' rule (*śāsane*)?" Paying them homage (*pūjā*), Madhusūdana proclaimed, "Where have you reached perfection, your worships (*bhagavantaḥ*)? What path has brought you

142. All such scenes would in principle be rejected from Fitzgerald's "main *Mahābhārata*" (2003, 811), on which see chapter 1 § B. According to Fitzgerald, bhakti runs were "probably added some time between 50 CE and 350 CE," including "the essential portions of the Bhagavad Gītā, all episodes that elaborate some theme of devotion to Viṣṇu, Śiva, or Kṛṣṇa," including these two and "several highly polished expressions of Kṛṣṇa bhakti in the narrative wake of Yudhiṣṭhira's *abhiṣeka*" between 12.40 and 12.56 (2006, 272–73).

143. At *Mbh* 13.16.8cd, however, Kṛṣṇa does get an eighth boon from Umā that enables him to feed 7,000 guests daily at his palace.

> here? What is to be done for your worships? What can I do for you? For what purpose have your worships come down to earth? (*kenārthenopasaṃprāptā bhagavanto mahītalam*)." (5.81.61–64)

This show of roadside hospitality to the celestial Ṛṣis now turns into a remarkable scene of friendship: Rāma Jāmadagnya, "embracing Govinda as an old friend in good conduct (*purā sucarite sakhā*)" (65cd), speaks for them. Having witnessed the old battles of the Gods and the Demons, the Ṛṣis are "everywhere (*sarvatas*) wishing to see the gathering of the royal Kṣatra, the kings sitting in the hall, and yourself speaking the truth, Janārdana. We are coming to watch this grand spectacle, Keśava" (67–68). Jāmadagnya in particular wishes to hear what Kṛṣṇa, Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Vidura and others will say, and closes, "Go unhindered, hero, we shall see you in the hall" (72cd). Note the depth of precedent behind this exchange: not only have the Ṛṣis witnessed the old Deva–Asura wars; there is the veiled reference to an old *sakhi* "friendship" between Kṛṣṇa and Rāma Jāmadagnya. This is probably an affinity in their tasks, since this Rāma brought about the "destruction of the Kṣatriyas," as Kṛṣṇa will now do as well. Or did they meet before when Kṛṣṇa was Rāma?

As we have noted, Kṛṣṇa's welcome by the Kurus is no simple matter: he rejects Duryodhana's hospitality and spends the night at Vidura's. But finally Kṛṣṇa enters the hall—in the same capital at which Draupadī was disrobed, if not the same hall:

> There standing amidst the kings, the foe-scorcher Dāśārha, conqueror of enemy cities, saw the Ṛṣis hovering in the sky (*apaśyad antarikṣasthān ṛṣīn*). While watching them, headed by Nārada, Dāśārha said softly to Bhīṣma, "King, the Ṛṣis have come to watch the earthly assembly, and should be invited and honored with seats and full hospitality (*satkāreṇa ca bhūyasā*). No one can sit before they are seated. Let homage (*pūjā*) be paid to these Munis whose souls have been perfected." Śāṃtanava, seeing the Ṛṣis arrived at the gate of the hall, hurriedly ordered the servants: "Seats!" and they brought large and wide smooth seats that sparkled with gold and gems. (5.92.40–45)

Clearly, the poets leave questions that an attentive reader or Ṛṣisaṅgha might ask: Was the hall open to the sky? Did Bhīṣma only see the Ṛṣis when they got to the gate? How many seats did the servants provide? How many angels can dance on the head of a pin? But this is serious business.[144] Once everyone falls

144. Cf. the fantastic provision of theologically suitable seats for vast celestial and earthly audiences to hear the *dharma* in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (Watson 1997, 75–78, 115, 121–22),

silent looking at the elixir of the dark yellow-robed Lord (51–53) in the middle of the court, Kṛṣṇa makes his first speech, beginning, "Let there be peace . . ." (93.3ab).

The Ṛṣis are not silent in this assembly. Rāma Jāmadagnya warns Duryodhana with the story of the ancient king Dambhodbhava who foolishly challenged the Ṛṣis Nara and Nārāyaṇa at their Badarī hermitage (5.94). Other Ṛṣis follow with further stories. Then Kṛṣṇa addresses Duryodhana directly, as do others, including his mother, all to no avail, before Duryodhana tries to capture Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa then gives the Ṛṣis, along with only Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Vidura, and Saṃjaya, the divine eye to see his theophany (5.129.13–14), and quits the court. Having met with the Pāṇḍavas' mother Kuntī, who sends words to her sons through him, his last business before going back to the Pāṇḍavas is with Karṇa.

This scene at the end of Kṛṣṇa's embassy illustrates our whole nexus. Dhṛtarāṣṭra said, "Before he rode out amidst princes and councilors, O Saṃjaya, Madhusūdana had Karṇa mount his chariot"—a kind of hospitality, I believe, for two men away from home. Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks, "What consolations (*kāni sāntvāni*)"[145] did Kṛṣṇa-Govinda offer with his "voice roaring like a flood or a cloud" to the Sūta's son, "whether gently or sharply" (*mṛdu vā yadi vā tīkṣṇam*) (5.138.1–3). Saṃjaya replies, "Hear from me" what the two said "in the course of their conversing, in words that were smooth (*ślakṣṇāni*) and gentle (*mṛdūni*), dear (*priyāṇi*), joined with *dharma* (*dharmayuktāni*), truthful (*satyāni*), helpful (*hitāni*), and *to be cherished in the heart* (*hṛdayagrahaṇiyāni*)" (4–5). Recounting Karṇa's true origins, Kṛṣṇa tells him he is legally a Pāṇḍava—on his father's side related to the Pāṇḍavas, on his mother's to the Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis—and offers him the kingship. The Pāṇḍavas and the Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis will clasp his feet. Draupadī will make him her sixth. Hospitality indeed! Kṛṣṇa himself will consecrate him. As Karṇa rides the royal chariot, Yudhiṣṭhira, as his heir-apparent, will fan him. Arjuna will drive the chariot. Karṇa will have a whole new life, on which Kṛṣṇa concludes: "Your allies shall shudder with joy, your enemies with fear. Today let there be good brotherhood (*saubhrātram*) between you and your Pāṇḍava brothers!" (138.9–28). Both Kṛṣṇa and Karṇa would know how these changes for Karṇa would also change things entirely for Karṇa's real friend (*sakhi*), Duryodhana, and for the larger Pāṇḍava–Kaurava *saubhrātra*-"brotherhood," of whom Kṛṣṇa says nothing here.[146] Karṇa does not doubt that Kṛṣṇa is a wellwisher speaking from love or affection, and further, that he speaks to Karṇa's best interests "out of friendship" (139.1).

145. Conciliations, mild words? Van Buitenen has "blandishments" (1978, 444).

146. Kuntī too says to Karṇa, just after this: "Let the Kurus today witness the meeting of Karṇa and Arjuna in a spirit of brotherhood (*saubhrātreṇa*)" (5.143.9).

The theme of these words being heartfelt is then carried through to the parting words of their meeting, where Kṛṣṇa responds to Karṇa's explanation of why he must refuse. "Kṛṣṇa said, 'Of a certainty the destruction of the earth is now near, for my words do not touch your heart, Karṇa (*tathā hi me vacaḥ karṇa na upaiti hṛdayaṃ tava*). When the destruction of all creatures is at hand, bad policy disguised as good does not crawl off from the heart (*anayo nayasaṃkāśo hṛdayān nāpasarpati*)" (141.43–44). Kṛṣṇa commends Karṇa for holding to good policy from his heart, despite rejecting Kṛṣṇa's offer. As they part, Karṇa "clasped Mādhava tightly (*pariṣvajya ca pīḍitam*)" (47b).[147] As befits the *Mahābhārata*'s *bhakti* politics of friend and foe, Kṛṣṇa and Karṇa's embrace extends the circle of Kṛṣṇa's men and women friends to include even the sworn enemy, and, as with Arjuna, combines the roles of friend and devotee.

Now as Saṃjaya told the blind old Kaurava king, Kṛṣṇa's words in this dialogue were "smooth and gentle, dear, joined with *dharma*, truthful, helpful, and to be cherished in the heart." In *whose* heart? Karṇa's, whose words are equally heartfelt? Dhṛtarāṣṭra's, as first listener? The hearts of the seated attendees listening to the *Mahābhārata*'s first recital at the Snake Sacrifice of Pāṇḍavas' great grandson? The hearts of the great Ṛṣis listening to its retelling in the Naimiṣa Forest? All listeners and readers? The phrase puts big asterisks to these heartfelt words, which provide one of those points where we can feel that the notion of the "wellwisher" ultimately extends to the *bhakti* community of readers that the *Mahābhārata* seeks to create as its audience of aficionados: that is, what classical Indian aesthetic theory calls its *sahṛdayas*, those who appreciate a work of art because they are "with it at heart."

In conclusion, we come back to the necessities and niceties of textual discretion in portraying the hiddenness of gods among men, which constrains even Kṛṣṇa to operate within human limits, and in Rāma's case is tacitly structured into the *Rāmāyaṇa* around the boon that Rāvaṇa can be slain only by a man. *Bhakti* and *dharma* are in the sinews of these texts *as we have them*. Positing political ideologies or class interests as prior to their *bhakti* can only dim what they are, and positing pre-Mauryan oral precursors with no evidence that their formulations of *dharma* could be that early is to beg endless questions in a vacuum.[148] Rather than a "rage" at the loss of Brahmin privilege under

147. This embrace may recall the parallels between Sugrīva and Karṇa in the killings of Vālin and Droṇa discussed in chapter 9, for Rāma and Sugrīva also seal their friendship with such a close embrace (*paryaṣvajata pīḍitam*; *Rām* 4.5.13)—in each epic, an embrace between Viṣṇu's incarnation and a son of the Sun god. As with Rāma and Sugrīva, the embrace of Kṛṣṇa and Karṇa sets the conditions under which each will do the other's will.

148. As evident in earlier chapters, I am in working concurrence with Olivelle's post-Aśokan dating of the *dharmasūtras* (2006*b*), and do not consider the epics' understanding of *dharma* to be older than the *dharmasūtras*. The problem arises, for instance, where Fitzgerald says that "Aśoka preempted the brahmin monopoly on the teaching of *dharma*" (2006*a*, 276). As Olivelle's careful reading (2004*a*) of pre-*dharmasūtra* Vedic and *sūtra* texts demonstrates,

Aśoka and the Mauryas,[149] I believe that the rapport the *Mahābhārata* sustains between *bhakti* and *dharma* reflects a later, post-Mauryan, sly and confident sense of taking over the game. For the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it would appear to be the same game disambiguated by adding live Vedic Brahmins to exemplify *dharma* as hosts and guests through the hero's long career. In both epics, however, *bhakti* is a trump card played discretely and not that often (though certainly more often in the *Mahābhārata*). And it is played with a deck stacked with Ṛṣis who, by "doing the gods' work," map a *new* Brahmanical *dharma* over time and across the land, making it familiar in every sense. It is this combination that could give life to a king who has listened well enough to Kṛṣṇa and even better to the Ṛṣis, as is the case with Yudhiṣṭhira the son of Dharma; or to a king who, as a hidden god himself, could be the Vedic Ṛṣis' "beloved guest." As we shall now see in chapter 13, Aśvaghoṣa could respond to this game from a familiarity with both epics, to map *bhakti* into the Buddha's quest for the "true *dharma*."

there is no evidence of Brahmins "teaching *dharma*" or monopolizing that topic in them. Moreover, even in the *dharmasūtras* the monopoly that Brahmins assert is not in teaching *dharma* but, as we have seen repeatedly since chapter 5, in the ritual sphere of teaching Vedic recitation (*adhyāpanam*), performing sacrifices, and receiving gifts—the three "jobs" (*karmas*) reserved for them.

149. Fitzgerald posits a post-Aśokan "deep and bitter political rage at the center of the *Māhabhārata*" (2001, 85).

13

Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*

A Buddhist Reading of the Sanskrit Epics and Their Treatments of *Dharma*

One finds mounting evidence that classical Buddhist and Brahmanical *dharma* texts use the term *dharma* knowingly as regards each others' usages.[1] Yet once we are past the Nikāyas, both traditions were sparing in direct references to each other. The Sanskrit epics, as we have seen, adopted what can be called, at best, a civil silence toward Buddhism, and for the most part Buddhist texts responded in kind.[2] This chapter will deal with a major exception: the "Life of the Buddha" by the Sanskrit poet Aśvaghoṣa. By the first or second-century CE, Aśvaghoṣa's time, a Brahmanical–Buddhist interface had gone on for roughly half a millennium without any known text being direct about it since the Nikāyas. No doubt that is where Aśvaghoṣa saw his inspiration to reengage. Yet he did not do so under the same conditions as the Buddha or the Nikāyas. Biardeau proposes a good angle from which to catch up quickly on the new conditions. By Aśvaghoṣa's time, two forms of *bhakti*, Brahmanical and Buddhist, were developing

1. See chapters 4, 6, and 7 on Buddhist texts; 5, 6, and 12 § C Brahmanical ones. This chapter revises Hiltebeitel 2006*b*, which, as the first chapter drafted for this book, was written to be its last one.

2. Though with exceptions, most notably in the Jātakas which have parallel material that is difficult to date relative to the Sanskrit epics, but which often looks parodic or displaced; see Hiltebeitel 1976 [1990], 64–67; Gombrich 1985 as mentioned in the text. See also Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 459 n. 15 on the Kuṣāṇa period "Spitzer manuscript" found in east Turkestan and most recently presented by Franco 2004.

beside each other, in the latter case among Buddhists who were "for the most part of Indian origins and inserted in the society of castes," fully "at home" there, with no one desiring their departure, despite the "Brahmanical manifesto" provided by the two epics (Biardeau 2002, 2: 776). As we shall see, the description fits Aśvaghoṣa quite well.

A. Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*

Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* is worth looking at not only for what it says directly about Buddhism and the Sanskrit epics but about what his treatment of them might be able to tell us about how *dharma*, and particularly *royal dharma*, remained a central topic of this intertextual and interreligious game. In recognizing that Aśvaghoṣa focuses his Buddhist narrative on *dharma*, and positing that one of the main things that would have interested him in the Brahmanical epics would have been *their* treatment of *dharma*, we might also be able to improve upon earlier treatments of the question of what kind of *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* Aśvaghoṣa would have been responding to. This means that we first need to look more closely into Aśvaghoṣa's likely dates.

Étienne Lamotte upholds Chinese traditions that Aśvaghoṣa was "contemporary with Kaniṣka" whom Lamotte dates at "ca. 128–51" CE ([1958] 1988, 591, 655). However, as Lamotte puts it, this association of Aśvaghoṣa with Kaniṣka comes from fourth and fifth century "Chinese documentation on Indian origins of poor quality and without historical interest" ([1958] 1988, 698), so it is not clear why he upholds these sources on the connection of Aśvaghoṣa with Kaniṣka in opposition to others' skepticism about it. E. H. Johnston (2004), who after nearly seventy years still holds place as the best introduction to Aśvaghoṣa,[3] prefers a pre-Kaniṣka date for him, noting that Chinese tradition made Aśvaghoṣa into an exorcist saint (2004, xv, xxxv). Taking Kaniṣka's likely date to be ca. 75–125 CE, Johnston places Aśvaghoṣa "between 50 B.C. and 100 A.D., with a preference for the first half of the first century A.D." (xvii).[4] In offering one of the first recent discussions of the

3. Johnston's monumental ten-year study of the *Buddhacarita* provides a critically edited text through most of the first fourteen cantos (Part 1); translation of those cantos with lengthy Introduction plus extensive notes on the text and the translations (Part 2); and translation of the last fourteen cantos mainly from the Tibetan, with an attempted rough reconstruction of the Sanskrit from both fifth-century Chinese and later Tibetan translations (Part 3). Reference to "Parts" will be made only to Part 1. Although Olivelle 2008 offers an important new translation of the extant Sanskrit portions and an excellent discussion of the *Buddhacarita*'s interest in *dharma* generously citing my treatment in Hiltebeitel 2006*a*, I will continue to cite or work mainly from Johnston's translation in this chapter, turning to Olivelle's translation and introduction only where new insights or clarity arise—as will be the case especially in § F.2 on "Buddhist *Mokṣadharma*."

4. Johnston throughout speaks of Aśvaghoṣa as a first-century CE poet; see 2004, xiii–xvii; xxxviii, xl. He had changed his view since translating the *Saundarananda*; see Johnston 1928, vi: "generally agreed to have flourished early in the second century A.D."

Buddhacarita, the 2005 fifth edition of *Buddhist Religions: A Historical Introduction* by Richard Robinson, Willard Johnson, and Thanissaro Bhikkhu (a.k.a. Geoffrey DeGraff) likewise gives Kaniṣka's date as "late first or early second century C.E." (76), and treats Aśvaghoṣa as preceding him in "approximately the first century C.E." (5). This edition, which both refines and considerably extends (8–11) what the fourth edition of 1997 had to say about Aśvaghoṣa and the *Buddhacarita*, contextualizes Aśvaghoṣa as a contributor to a first-century turn to writing affecting both Theravāda and Sanskrit Buddhist texts, a turn that further "parallels a contemporary development in Indian fine literature" in which "some of the greatest poets and prose stylists of this period—Aśvaghoṣa, Mātṛceta, and Ārya Śūra—[were] Buddhist monks" (77). Richard Salomon points to "inscriptional specimens of *kāvya* . . . now available as early as the beginning of the first century," which are "consistent with the evidence of literary sources themselves, notably the works of Aśvaghoṣa which point toward a flourishing *kāvya* in the first century A.D."[5] Most intriguing to me has been Giuliano Boccali's observation that a totally new *kāvya* sensibility can be noticed when both Aśvaghoṣa (see *Buddhacarita* [*BC*] 4.30) and Hāla in the *Sattasaī* (the oldest anthology of Prakrit poems), both around the same time—which for Boccali is the first-century CE[6]—introduce women pretending to stumble to attract the hero's attention: something, Boccali noted, that we would not imagine in any prior literature, including the Sanskrit epics, which are "totally lacking in such stereotypes of love."[7]

In brief, although there are those who lean toward a second-century dating,[8] there is a good weight of varied scholarly considerations favoring the first century. Moreover, Johnston shows that the Tibetan and especially the fifth-century CE Chinese translator must have had a *Buddhacarita* that does not differ much from the oldest surviving Sanskrit manuscript, which he dates to 1300 +/-50 (vii). Lamotte ([1958] 1988, 656) and Beal (1968) date this Chinese translation by Dharmakṣema or Dharmarakṣa to around 420, establishing that a quite stable *Buddhacarita*, like the one we have, had come to China at least by the *early* fifth century. This guarantees that virtually all the verses of the oldest Sanskrit manuscript (and the three others used by Cowell ([1894] 1968) that,

5. Salomon 1998, 233. See similarly Dimock, Gerow, Naim, Ramanujan, Roadarmel, and van Buitenen 1974, 119, connecting Aśvaghoṣa with first-century CE *praśasti* inscriptions and developments in *kāvya* (the author of this segment is Edwin Gerow).

6. Martha Selby (2003, xxvi) dates Hāla's reign at Pratiṣṭhana/Paithan to 20–24 CE. This Śatavāhana capital is not to be confused with the Pratiṣṭhāna mentioned as the first lunar dynasty capital in chapter 12 § A.

7. Guliano Boccali, "Introduction" to concluding roundtable discussion on "Origins of Mahākāvya: Problems and Perspectives," Origins of Mahākāvya: International Seminar, Università degli Studi de Milano, Milan, June 4–5, 2004.

8. Olivelle 1993, 121, having first accepted Johnston's first-century CE date, more recently says Aśvaghoṣa is "generally assigned to the 1st–2nd centuries C.E." (2005, 24; see also Olivelle 2008, xix–xxv); Strong offers "second century A.D.?" (1983, 31).

according to Johnston, derive from it) would "be either part of the original or old interpolations" (2004, Part 1, viii). This does not deter Johnston from devoting a page to "almost certain" and "doubtful" interpolations (Part 1, xvii–xviii), but these are neither numerous nor extensive.

B. The Centrality of *Dharma* in Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*

It is a surprising point to have to make that Aśvaghoṣa would be centrally concerned with *dharma*, but others, with the exception recently of Olivelle (2008), seem to have missed it. According to Robinson et al., "Aśvaghoṣa's main concern in portraying the Buddha's teaching career is to refute the various Brahmanical positions extant in his day. Thus he emphasizes the philosophical side of the Buddha's teaching role almost—albeit not entirely—to the exclusion of the religious side" (2005, 23). It is important to their presentation that "[t]he *Buddhacarita* is among the earliest extant texts to explicitly state that there is no self."[9] According to Lamotte, Aśvaghoṣa's "*Buddhacarita* and *Saundarananda* are on a level with the classical *mahākāvya*. The scholastic parts remain faithful to the traditional vocabulary and phraseology; the narrative and descriptive parts abound in brilliant images, figures of style, complicated metres, and learned grammatical forms. The author seems to have wanted to dazzle his less knowledgeable colleagues by fully deploying his brahmanical virtuosity. His search for effect and his conciseness, taken almost to the point of unintelligibility, give the impression of a decadent art" (Lamotte [1958] 1988, 591–92). Johnston acknowledges Aśvaghoṣa's interest in refuting Brahmanical traditions, especially with regard to the proto-Sāṃkhya that Aśvaghoṣa puts into the mouth of Arāḍa Kālāma (2004, lvi–lxii), and he discusses at length Aśvaghoṣa's standing as a *kāvya* poet (lxxix ff.). But Johnston's Aśvaghoṣa is more multifaceted. Johnston underscores how "the breath of *bhakti*" (xxvi) animates certain passages emphasizing *śraddhā* or "faith,"[10] but with a restraint toward the miraculous[11]—"more by devotion to the Buddha and a respect for scripture than a love for the

9. Robinson et al. 2005, 91; see *B* 14.84; 15.80–86 (teaching to Śreṇya-Bimbisāra), 26.18.

10. Most of these are in the *Saundarananda*, but he also cites Canto 27 in the *Buddhacarita* (Johnston 2004, xxv–xxvii). See also xxxiv, xxxvii, xcvi, and Aśvaghoṣa's interest in *pari-pratyaya*, "reliance on others" (xxxiv–xxxv), which Johnston relates to Mahādeva's five points about the arhat, and to the Mahāsaṅghikas (Johnston 2004, xxvii–xxxi), a sect that revered Mahā-Kaśyapa (xxvii, xxviii), to whom Aśvaghoṣa gives major billing.

11. See Johnston 2004, xxxix and *Buddhacarita* 1.11, where, rather than mention the Buddha's descent from the Tuṣita heaven, one reads *cyutaḥ khād iva*, "as if he came from the sky." Cf. *Saundarananda* 2.48–50, where such birth miracles are mentioned.

marvelous."[12] Here too Johnston alludes to Aśvaghoṣa's knowledge of texts, a point I will turn to in the next section. But Johnston never once mentions a concern with *dharma*, coming close only once with a statement that Aśvaghoṣa's "standpoint remains *entirely moral*, free from any attempt at metaphysical speculation" (2004, xli; my italics). Scholarly work on *dharma* by Johnston's time seems to have been rather scattered, and he might have had a somewhat nebulous ahistorical view of the term that many still have today.

Since Aśvaghoṣa's interest in the topic of *dharma* will remain central to this chapter, I will limit discussion for now to two points that will demonstrate, hopefully sufficiently, that the unfolding of *dharma* from a Buddhist perspective is probably Aśvaghoṣa's most central concern. For the first of these, let me just say quickly that Aśvaghoṣa clearly makes it his task to attempt a virtuoso rehearsal and contextualization of all the varied Buddhist *and Brahmanical* uses and meanings of *dharma* likely to have been known to him. Thus on the Buddhist side he treats many of the basic Buddhist meanings of *dharma* that were noted in chapter 4, offering precise moments for *dharma*s (plural) as "elements of existence"[13] and for *dharma* as "inherent quality,"[14] as well as for such staples as the *saddharma* or "true dharma,"[15] the *dharmacakrapravartana* or "Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma" (*BC* 15.54–44), and even the *dharmakāya* (24.10). And on the Brahmanical side, while giving direct reference to *varṇa*

12. Johnston 2004, xxxix–xl; see, for example, *BC* 6.68, describing the groom Chandaka's return: "Sometimes he brooded and sometimes he lamented, sometimes he stumbled and sometimes he fell. So journeying in grief under *the force of his devotion* (*bhaktivaśena*), he performed many actions along the road in complete abandon." The passage combines *kāvya* style, used earlier with the smitten women, with *viraha bhakti*, with a result that Chandaka acts much like a Gopī. The opening of the same Canto at 6.5–8 combines with this end to make it a *bhakti* set piece. That Aśvaghoṣa recognizes such conventions is an indication that they are established by the time of his composition. See similarly 9.8 and 9.80–82 (a set piece on *rājabhakti* as inadvertent *buddhabhakti* by two Brahmins). On the "double sense" of *bhakti* in 4.32, see Johnston 49 n. 32, in agreement with Gawronski 1914–15, 26.

13. See especially *BC* 12.106, in which the Buddha is reflecting just before his five companions leave him and he goes to sit under the bodhi tree: "By the practice of trance those *dharma*s are obtained through which is won the highest, peaceful stage, so hard to reach, which is ageless and deathless (*dhyānapravartanād dharmāḥ prāpyante yair āpyate/ durlabhaṃ śāntam ajaram paraṃ tad amṛtaṃ padam*)." As Johnston indicates "The reference is to the *bodhipakṣika dharmas*" (2004, 184, n. 106). This is I believe the first usage in the text of the technical sense of *dharma*s in the plural. Johnston also reconstructs this plural usage from the Tibetan and Chinese translations also at 17.18 and 24.27.

14. See *BC* 12.70, where the prince thanks Arāḍa Kālāma but ponders, expresses reservations, and moves on: "For I am of the opinion that the field-knower, although liberated from the primary (*prakṛti*) and secondary (*vikāra*) constituents, still possesses the quality (*dharman*) of giving birth and also [the quality (*dharman*)] of being seed: *vikāraprakṛtibhyo hi kṣetrajñam muktam apy aham/ manye prasavadharmāṇam bījadharmāṇam eva ca*."

15. See *BC* 13.1 (Māra as *saddharmaripus*, "enemy of the true *dharma*"); 13.31 (the divine sages in their pure abodes are "devoted to the good law"; continuing: they are *dharmātmā*, "given to *dharma*" (Johnston), whereas Māra's hosts are *hiṃsātmā*, "cruel" (Johnston), or "given to violence" [13.32]). The term also occurs when Asita comes "thirsting for the holy Law" (1.49) and predicts that the Buddha will deliver it (1.74), and in the ironic words of Chandaka at 6.31.

(caste) only in passing (4.18) and spinning out debates about *āśramadharma* without ever precisely calling it that,[16] he provides special moments for *dharma* in the *trivarga* (10.28–38, 11.58), *kuladharma* (10.39), and the three debts a man owes to his ancestors, the seers, and the gods (9.65).[17] I will return to all these matters.[18]

Second, I would like to illustrate as a prime example of the salience of this concern, and for its foundational importance for all that follows, how Aśvaghoṣa presents the famous story of how the princely young Buddha-to-be encounters the four signs. For the first outing (*BC* 3.26–38), the Śuddhādhivāsa gods create the "illusion of an old man" (26). The prince[19] asks his charioteer about it: "Is this some transformation in him, or his original state, or mere chance (*yadṛcchā*)?" Thanks to the gods' confusing the charioteer into spilling the beans about old age, the prince, having learned the truth, "started a little (*calitaḥ ca kiṃcid*)" and offered this first response: "Will this evil come upon me also? (*kim eṣa doṣo bhavitā mamāpi*)" (32)—a rather shallow response compared to what he says when next confronted with signs two and three. For now, he asks to be taken back to the city; he cannot take pleasure "when the fear of old age rules in my mind (*jarābhaye cetasi vartamāne*)" (37d). For the second outing (3.39–53), the same gods fashion a diseased man. The prince's first thoughts on this are more reflective: "Thereupon the king's son looked at the man compassionately (*sānukampyo*) and spoke: 'Is this evil (*doṣa*) peculiar to him, or is the danger of disease (*rogabhayam*) common to all men?' " (43). Made aware of the realities, he observes the "vast ignorance (*vistīrṇam ajñānam*)" of men "who sport under the very shadow of disease" (46). When he has returned to the palace, his father, sensing the prince had "already abandoned" him (49), scolds "the officer in charge of clearing the roads," but with no severe punishment, and prepares another outing hoping to change the prince's mood. For the third outing (3.54–65), the same gods now fashion a lifeless man, arranging it so that only the prince and charioteer see it (54)! Now the prince's question is still more sophisticated: "Is this law of being (*dharmaḥ*) peculiar to this man, or is

16. As Olivelle 1993, 120–21 on *BC* 5.30–33 shows, Brahmanical *āśrama* ("life-pattern" or "life-stage") formulations were still in flux. Curiously, the *Ugraparipṛcchā*, an early Mahāyāna text probably from around the first-century CE (Nattier [2003] 2005, 41–45, 193), and thus around or shortly before Aśvaghoṣa's dates, shows similar early variation in formulations on the "stages" (*bhūmis*) of the *Bodhisattva* career (151–52), along with intense recommendation that not only monks but lay householders take up this arduous path to Buddhahood.

17. On Aśvaghoṣa's treatment of these, possibly referring to *Manu*, and its understanding of the term *mokṣa*, see Olivelle 2008, xx–xxii and § F.2.

18. See also 4.83, 7.14, and especially 9.76 and 13.49 for criticism of the uncertainties and wavering of traditional āgamic authorities.

19. As I will usually call him, except where Aśvaghoṣa uses other terms for him, notably Bodhisattva, which, since it occurs for the living prince for the first time at *BC* 9.30, I will not use to describe him before that point in the text.

such the end of all creatures? (*kiṃ kevalo 'syaiva janasya dharmaḥ sarvaprajānām ayam īdṛśo 'ntaḥ*)?" (58cd). To which the charioteer replies, "This is the last act for all creatures (*sarvaprajānām idam antakarma*). Destruction is inevitable for all in the world, be he of low or middle or high degree" (59). In short, from first asking about only himself with regard to old age to asking about whether disease is unique to one or common to all, he is now, when it comes to the dead man, still framing the question in the same way as for the diseased man, but not only asking whether death applies to one or to all but asking after the underlying "law" (*dharma*) that results in death. But whereas the prince asks about a "law," the charioteer answers him only in terms of "acts," very nicely translated as "the last act." So the discovery of such a law will remain the prince's problem.[20] He is not handed such a law by a charioteer—I am, of course, alluding to the *Bhagavad Gītā*—or anyone else. Instead of *dharma* being revealed, it is approached through developing insight.[21] As elsewhere, there is a convergence point between *dharma* and *mṛtyu*,[22] and perhaps of the two with ignorance (here *ajñāna*). Now the prince suddenly becomes "faint on hearing of death" (*śrutvaiva mṛtyum*; 60), grabs the chariot rail, and then reflects "in a melodious voice" (61) that "this is the end appointed for all creatures (*iyaṃ ca niṣṭhā niyatā prajānām*)" and how, to appear happy, men must harden their hearts for them to be in good cheer as they fare along the road (*adhvan*; 61). He asks to return to the city as it is no time for pleasure resorts (62), but the driver goes at the king's behest to a grove prepared in advance, a park filled with birds and beautiful women, which the prince experiences as if he were a Muni carried there by force to a place presenting "obstacles" (65). This sylvan pause gives Aśvaghoṣa the opportunity to devote the next canto of lacy *kāvya* to the wiles of women (one of whom, as noted, even pretends to stumble), and the prince's newfound indifference to them, before he is visited by the fourth sign (5.1–15).

The prince now heads out, again with his father's permission, to see the forests, taking a retinue of companions (*sakhibhis*; *BC* 5.2) who are the sons of ministers. He rides Kanthaka, but the charioteer is not with him. Going to

20. It is interesting to compare Aśvaghoṣa's innovations with the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* scene (*DN* 14.2), where the Buddha describes how the former Buddha Vipassī responded to his charioteer upon learning of the four signs. Vipassī has a similar shallow response to the first sign: "But am I liable to become old, and not exempt from old age?" (Walshe [1987] 1995, 208). But Vipassī's responses remain at this level through signs two and three, with no one mentioning *dhamma* until the shaven-headed wanderer (*pabbajita*), as the fourth sign, seems to introduce the term to him: "Prince, by one who has gone forth we mean one who truly follows Dhamma" (Ibid., 210).

21. At *BC* 7.46, just after the great departure, he tells the first anchorites he meets that he is still "a novice at *dharma* (*me dharmanavagrahasya*)." Cf. Gawronski 1914–15, 33, taking this as "(of me) who have newly taken to the *dharma* i.e. who am a neophyte regarding it," and citing 11.7 as a further unfolding of this theme.

22. See chapter 3 § F on the opening of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*; chapter 9 § C on the epics and their substories.

distant jungle-land (presumably “savannah”) he sees the soil being ploughed, and, seeing insects cut up, he mourns for them as for his own kindred (5). Seeking clearness of mind, he stops his wellwishers (*suhṛdas*, 7) and goes to sit beneath a Jambū tree.[23] There, “reflecting on the origin and destruction of creation (*jagataḥ prabhavavyayau vicinvan*)” and taking “the path of mental stillness” (9), he enters the “first trance of calmness” (10) and attains “concentration of mind (*manaḥ samādhim*)” (11). And, having rightly perceived it, he meditates on the “course of the world (*lokagatim*).” This meditation soon carries forward from what was brought into focus around the term *dharma* as he encountered the third sign:

> A wretched thing it is indeed (*kṛpaṇam bata*) that a man, who is himself helpless and subject to the law of old age, disease, and destruction (*vyādhijarāvināśa-dharmā*), should in his ignorance and the blindness of his conceit, pay no heed to another (*param ajño*) who is the victim of old age, disease, *or* death [my italics]. For if I, who am myself such, should pay no heed to another whose nature is equally such, it would not be right or fitting in me, who have knowledge of this, the ultimate law (*paramaṃ dharmam imaṃ vijanato me*).[24]

He is realizing that this “law” involves a recognition of “the other” with whom all are in this together, which carries forward from the progression through the first three signs. And after verses 14–15 describe this insight further and its neutralizing of the passions in the prince, it is now the moment for the arrival of the fourth sign (5.16–21), which, rather than provoking these reflections, comes in response to them. Not fabricated by the gods like the other three signs, a *śramaṇa* appears as a *bhikṣu* or mendicant (5.16), and says, “In fear of birth and death [I] have left the home life for the sake of *mokṣa* (*pravrajato ‘smi mokṣahetoḥ*)” (17). He is a homeless wanderer-seeker, “accepting any alms I may receive (*yathopopannabhaikṣaḥ*)” (19), and, moreover, a “heavenly being who in that form had seen other Buddhas, and has encountered the prince to rouse his attention (*smṛti*)” (20), which he gets. For, “When that being went like a bird to heaven, the best of men was thrilled and amazed. And he gained awareness of *dharma* (*upalabhya tataś ca dharmasaṃjñām*) and set his mind on the way to leave his home.”[25] When he returns to the palace, it is “with yearning

23. In the *Nidānakathā*, this episode occurs when he is a mere child with nurses (see Warren 1998, 53–55).

24. *BC* 5.12–13: *kṛpaṇam bata yaj janaḥ svayaṃ sann/ avaśo vyādhijarāvināśadharmā//jarayārditam āturam mṛtam vā/ param ajño vijugupsate madāndhaḥ//iha ced aham īdṛśaḥ svayaṃ san/ vijugupseya paraṃ tathā svabhāvam//na bhavet sadṛśaṃ hi tat kṣamaṃ vā/ paramaṃ dharmam imaṃ vijānato me.*

25. *BC* 5.21: *gaganaṃ khagavad gate ca tasmin/ nṛvara saṃjahṛṣe visismiye ca//upalabhya tataś ca dharmasaṃjñām/ abhiniryāṇa vidhau matiṃ cakāra.*

aroused for the imperishable *dharma* (*akṣayadharmajātarāgaḥ*)" (25–26). One might wonder whether Aśvaghoṣa draws a contrast with the term *sanātanadharma*, "eternal *dharma*," which he would have had opportunity to know from both Sanskrit epics. An eternal *dharma* invokes the eternal Veda and a *dharma* that, while beyond appearances, is always subtly present, whereas an imperishable *dharma* could avoid these implications and evoke something that neither perishes nor originates but can always be rediscovered.[26] In any case, this birdlike divine creature sets the prince to the task of unfolding this new awareness of *dharma* he has already begun discovering on his own by setting his mind on departure from home—which is clearly not the locus of *this dharma*, although it will not fail to bear upon it.

C. Aśvaghoṣa the Brahmin, Buddhist Convert, and Scholar

On one matter, all agree, even though it is again only Chinese sources that actually state it: that Aśvaghoṣa was a Brahmin convert to Buddhism. Johnston gives numerous reasons to accept the Chinese tradition on this one point (2004, xviii), and actually hazards to speak of "the zeal of the convert" (xcvi). But Johnston's first claim for Aśvaghoṣa under the rubric of converted Brahmin is that "he had an acquaintance, so wide that no parallel can be found to it among other Buddhist writers, with all departments of Brahmanical learning" (lviii)—a topic to which Johnston devotes a whole section under the heading of "The Scholar" (xlvii–lxxix). He thus credits Aśvaghoṣa with Ṛgvedic knowledge;[27] familiarity with Brahmanical ritual texts (xlv, lxxviii, lxxiii–lxxxiv); the Upaniṣads (xlv–vi), early *nīti* (l–li), medical, astronomical/astrological, and *śilpa* (lii–liii) texts; early Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and possibly Vaiśeṣika texts (lvi–lxii); contemporary developments in *kāvya* (lxii–lxiii); and of course the two epics in some form (our next topic). But in a fascinating oversight or omission, he makes no attempt to relate Aśvaghoṣa's knowledge of Brahmanical *dharma* to any *dharma* literature. Perhaps he assumed that the epics were sufficient to cover what Aśvaghoṣa

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See Johnston 2004, 65 n. 21 on *dharmasaṃjñā* with *upa-labh*, in the "technical sense of the action of the mind in forming ideas or conceptions, based on the perceptions presented to it by the senses."

26. Horsch 2004, 439 mentions, without citation, early Buddhist usage of *sanātana* ("eternal") and *akālika* ("timeless") for *dhamma* as "correspond[ing] to the *sanātano dharmaḥ* of the Hindu philosophers," but that the *dhamma* is "fixed" whether Tathāgatas rise up or do not (citing *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 2, p. 24, W. Geiger trans.). Cf. Nattier 2003, 142: a *Bodhisattva* must "be born in his final life into a world devoid of Buddhism, where he will rediscover its truths for himself." See chapter 6 above.

27. See Johnston 2005, xlv and 124–25, note to *BC* 14.9: "The legend of Vasiṣṭha's descent from Urvaśī is alluded to in the RigVeda," which the verse refers to, although it "had already been lost sight of by the time of the epics."

knew of Brahmanical *dharma*, but that, I believe, would be a very risky assumption. The prince's friend Udāyin does cite epic precedents as to the duty to fulfill women's desire at *BC* 4.66–67 (though not the most obvious such case: Arjuna's accommodation of the Nāgī or serpent woman Ulūpī, which hinges on her interpretation of this "highest *dharma*" [*Mbh* 1.206.23–33])—counsel which Aśvaghoṣa describes as "specious words, supported by scriptural tradition (*āgama*)" (*BC* 4.83) that the prince deafeningly rejects (84–99). But there is probably more than epic precedent when, soon after King Śuddhodana's rule is compared to that of "Manu, son of the sun" (2.16), Aśvaghoṣa describes the young prince growing up in a kingdom where his father not only practiced all the virtues of self-restraint, offered large fire ceremonies (36), and drank soma as enjoined by the Vedas (37), but judged petitions impartially "and observed purity of justice (*vyavahāra-śuddham*) as being holy (*śivam*)" (39), did not execute the guilty but imposed mild punishments (42), and taxed fairly (44)—all this while the king "pondered on the Śāstra" (*vimamarśa śāstram*, 52).[28]

In any case, Johnston makes several astute assessments on Aśvaghoṣa's erudition that are worth quoting. First, he says that "Aśvaghoṣa writes for a circle in which Brahmanical learning and ideas are supreme; his references to Brahmins personally and to their institutions are always worded with the greatest respect, and his many mythological parallels are all drawn from Brahmanical sources."[29] Second, Johnston says that Aśvaghoṣa's accuracy and even pedantry bind us "to assume that his learned references are strictly in accordance with the authorities he used," even though "these authorities are for the most part no longer extant" (xliv). Third, and most important, he observes that Aśvaghoṣa "seems at times to delight in expressing Buddhist views in a way that would remind Hindu readers of their own authorities" (lv). If so, for the long run, at least, this was probably wishful thinking, as his verse was little cited after Kālidāsa (lxxix–lxxxii) and only half-survived in four Sanskrit manuscripts until modern interests somewhat resurrected him. Johnston also remarks that by "introducing so much Hindu learning [Aśvaghoṣa] offended against the puritan moment in Buddhism" (xxxvii), which likewise did little to later acclaim him—at least in subsequent Indian Buddhist texts, although the Chinese Pilgrim I-Tsing found the *Buddhacarita* popular in India in the seventh

28. *Vyāvahāra* is "justice" in "judicial procedure," that is, jurisprudence, as the examples make evident—an important innovative emphasis in *Manu* (see chapter 5). By the Buddha's account, his predecessor Vipassī (see n. 20 above) was also, even as a boy, instructed by his father when trying legal cases (*Mahāpadāna Sutta* [*DN* 14] 1.37).

29. Johnston 2004, xv–xvi. See especially *BC* 7.45, where the prince shows respect toward the *tapasvins*—"the upright-souled sages, the supporters of religion (*dharmabhṛtām*)—of the penance grove." Johnston 2004, xvi, n. 1 notes two exceptions, whose genuineness he doubts, in the *Saundarananda*. In any case, the point applies to the *Buddhacarita*.

century (Johnston 2004, xxxv–xxxvi) when he travelled in northeastern India around 672. Indeed, that may have been the level at which this "Buddhist epic" would have had its longest run in India. Recalling Johnston's emphasis on faith and *bhakti* in the *Buddhacarita*, it is not uninteresting that a text composed by a Brahmin convert to Buddhism who knew the epics and was attentive to Buddhist *bhakti* would find its longest response to be a "popular" one.

D. Aśvaghoṣa and Epic Precedents

Aśvaghoṣa thus presents us with the opportunity to study a "close reading" of both Brahmanical epics: close both in time, for I do not think it very likely that written versions of either epic can be more than three centuries earlier than Aśvaghoṣa, and more likely only preceded him by about a century or at the most two; and in relation to the question Johnston raises by insisting that Aśvaghoṣa is scrupulous in citing his authorities. With these points in mind, it is worth making a few observations about how Aśvaghoṣa treats both epics together before looking at the ways he treats each distinctly.

First, it seems there are recurrent points where he alludes to the two epics either together or alternately. Most striking is the first such instance when King Śuddhodana's court Brahmins interpret the baby prince's birth signs and refer to various texts, their authors, and then other heroic figures before the sage Asita arrives to read the signs definitively. To make the point that "Anyone may attain pre-eminence anywhere in the world, for in the case of the kings and seers the sons accomplished the various deeds their ancestors failed to do" (*BC* 1.46), these court Brahmins mention the following instances (I paraphrase from 1.41–45):

41. Although Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras were the founders of families, it was not they who created (*cakratus*) the "science of royal policy" (*rājaśāstra*), but their sons Śukra and Bṛhaspati.
42. The son of Sarasvatī promulgated again the lost Veda (*jagāda naṣṭaṃ vedam*) and Vyāsa divided it into many sections, which Vasiṣṭha (his great grandfather) had not done.
43. And Vālmīki was the first to create poetry (*vālmīkir adau ca sasarja padyam*), which Cyavana[30] did not do; and Ātreya[31] proclaimed the science of healing which Atri did not discover.

30. Another Bhārgava; but see Johnston 2004, 10 n. 43.
31. Perhaps alluding to Caraka; see Johnston 2004, 70, n. 43.

44. Viśvāmitra won Brahminhood (*dvijatvam*) which Kuśika (his grandfather) did not, and Sagara set a limit for the ocean which his Ikṣvāku predecessors did not achieve.
45. Janaka gained preeminence in instructing the twiceborn in yoga, and Śūra (Kṛṣṇa's father) and his kin were incapable of the celebrated deeds (*khyātāni karmāṇi*) of Śauri (i.e., Kṛṣṇa).

Verses 42–43 establish a clear *Mahābhārata–Rāmāyaṇa* alternation (Vyāsa and Vālmīki), whereas the rest refer to sages and kings known in both epics. This alternance and fusion, which occurs repeatedly, suggests a kind of *śleṣa* intention toward the two epics.[32] Moreover, it would be hard to explain how Aśvaghoṣa would know what he knows about the two poets, Vyāsa and Vālmīki, unless he were familiar with material from the twelfth book of the *Mahābhārata* (if not also the first) and from the first book of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (if not also the seventh). As Johnston remarks, one may infer from a verse in Aśvaghoṣa's earlier work, the *Saundarananda*, "that the story of Vālmīki's having taught the poem to Kuśa and Lava was familiar to him (2004, xlix). In fact, the verse credits Vālmīki with having performed the twins' childhood rites, and both Vālmīki and the boys with being "inspired" (*dhīmat*).[33]

But Aśvaghoṣa also has a point in making epic and other Brahmanical mythological allusions, though some of them are certainly obscure.[34] It is to bring across a realization that, no matter how illuminating heroic, sagely, and divine precedents may be as parallels, they are ultimately irrelevant to the achievement of the Buddha. Moreover, he makes this thoroughly intelligible Buddhist point in a manner that undercuts Brahmanical practice at one of its nerve centers. Aśvaghoṣa's manner of citation sets him apart from the practice of citing heroic and divine precedents that is found in both epics, but especially the *Mahābhārata* with its use of the *athāpy udāharanti* ("now they also quote") citational formula that is also used in most of the *dharmasūtras* (see chapter 5 § C). Indeed, the *Mahābhārata* cites precedents not only in substories featuring the great Vedic Ṛṣis (see chapter 9 § B) but in the words of many leading characters,

32. Johnston 2004, xciii–xcvi observes something analogous in Aśvaghoṣa's allowance of double Brahmanical and Buddhist meanings in *saṃdhi* passages with "a negative disappearing" (*BC* 3.25; 12.82 [he probably means 12.81]).

33. *Saundarananda* 1.26cd: *vālmīkiriva dhīmāṃs ca dhīmator maithileyayoḥ*; see Johnston 1928, 3 n. 26: "inspired" for *dhīmat*, referring "to Vālmīki's poetic inspiration in composing the *Rāmāyaṇa* and to Kuśa and Lava's artistic skill in repeating it." Yet Johnston 2004, xlix says, "As regards the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, I can find no reason to suppose that the poet knew any portion of it."

34. For unknown and uncertain references and usually Johnston's discussion thereof, see *BC* 41.16–18; 4.72–75; 4.80 (? Karālajanaka); 9.20; 9.69–70; 11.15, 11.18; 11.31 (Mekhala-Daṇḍakas); 13.11 (Śūrpaka, the fishes' foe); 28.32 (Eli and Paka).

and above all those of the author and the deity, that is, of Vyāsa and Kṛṣṇa.[35] On these matters, Aśvaghoṣa's stance is most vivid on the crucial point of the decision not to return home after the Buddha's "great departure." Here, the prince dispenses with royal precedents for returning home from the forest, including the precedent of Rāma, by saying to one of his father's emissaries, "And as for your quoting the instances of Rāma and the others to justify my return [home], they do not prove your case; for those who have broken their vows are not competent authorities in deciding matters of *dharma* (*na te pramāṇaṃ na hi dharmaniścayeṣv alaṃ pramāṇāya parikṣaya vratā*)" (*BC* 9.77). Rāma may offer precedent but not an "authority" (*pramāṇam*)! Moreover, we are left with the tantalizing question of what vow Rāma might have broken,[36] for it is almost certainly king Rāma, son of Daśaratha, who is being kept in focus here, even though Aśvaghoṣa can also refer to Rāma Dāśarathī and Rāma Jāmadagnya in one and the same breath.[37] Further along, one hears similarly how "Vasiṣṭha, Atri, and others came under the dominion of time"; so too Yayāti, etc., and hundreds of Indras, whereas Sambuddhas entered *nirvāṇa* (24.38–42). Finally, in the last canto, when seven kings are ready to go to war over the Buddha's bones and cite as heroic precedents for doing so Śiśupāla's stand against Kṛṣṇa, the end of Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas over a woman, Bhārgava Rāma's decimation of the Kṣatriyas, and Rāvaṇa's infatuation with Sītā (28.28–31), the point could not be clearer that heroic precedents from the Brahmanical epics are dangerous. Or, as John Brockington puts it in the case of the destruction of the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas, the story "figures as a moral warning" (1998, 484). Let us also note that Aśvaghoṣa does not miss the opportunity to lace his epic precedents with allusions to many of the great Vedic Ṛṣis *and their families*—in which descendants may surpass their eponymous ancestors. Indeed, without quite saying so, he restates the Nikāya view that tracing precedent to the great Vedic Ṛṣis is to follow a "procession of the blind" (see chapter 4 § A).

Yet we will also have occasions to note that Aśvaghoṣa, probably both as a *kāvya* poet and a Buddhist convert, could have his reasons for treating epic allusions with a little play. At *Buddhacarita* 4.16, for instance, Udāyin begins urging the women to show some gumption in seducing the prince: "Of old time, for instance, the great seer, Vyāsa, whom even the gods could hardly contend

35. For some discussion, see Hiltebeitel [1976] 1990, 261–66 (Kṛṣṇa reveals divine precedents for Arjuna's killing of Karṇa); 289–96 (Vyāsa and Kṛṣṇa reveal divine precedents for Yudhiṣṭhira's Aśvamedha); 2001*a*, 73 (*Idem*), 49, and 118–20 (Vyāsa reveals precedents for the polyandric marriage of Draupadī, on which see chapter 10 § B).

36. Neither Johnston nor Olivelle offers a suggestion.

37. See in the same canto *BC* 9.25, where the prince hears about both Rāmas and Bhīṣma as exemplars of doing deeds to please their fathers. See also 9.69, where he hears, "So too Rāma left the penance grove and protected the earth, when it was oppressed by the infidel (*anāryais*)"—on which Johnston is no doubt right that this probably refers to Bhārgava Rāma (2004, 137, n. 69).

with, was kicked with her foot by the harlot (*veśavadhvā*), Kāśisundarī." Johnston says, "The story is unidentified and it is uncertain if Kāśisundarī is a proper name or not" (2004, 46 n. 16). But most likely it unfolds, a bit bawdily, from the night Vyāsa spends happily siring Vidura with the Śūdra servant-woman of the Kāśi princess Ambikā, whom Ambikā adorns with her own jewels so that she looks "like an Apsaras" (*svair bhūṣaṇair dāsīm bhūṣayitvā apsaropamām*; *Mbh* 1.100.23)—that is, a beautiful heavenly courtesan—and sends to Vyāsa in her own stead, apparently to try to fool him (100.23–101.1; see chapter 8, §§ D and E). No doubt this maid would also be from Kāśi, and thus either named Kāśisundarī or described as "the beautiful Kāśi woman."[38] In effect, Udāyin would be saying, If nothing else works, give the prince a kick.

As we now proceed to Aśvaghoṣa's close reading of the epics themselves, I think we can thus allow ourselves a caveat with regard to Johnston's insistence that Aśvaghoṣa is scrupulous in citing authorities. I certainly believe that Aśvaghoṣa wants to be understood by those who know the epic texts. But it is unlikely that he or they knew them *only* as written texts, since by his time they no doubt already served as the basis for oral adumbrations in both Brahmanical and Buddhist circles in which either and indeed both together could have some fun with the text. This point is worth keeping in mind as we now address the more serious matters that interest Aśvaghoṣa in juxtaposing the life of the Buddha to scenes in both epics, not only separately but together, where they exemplify their different but also complementary guidelines on a basic problem raised by the Brahmanical *dharma* of householder kings.

E. The *Buddhacarita* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*

As Johnston points out, Aśvaghoṣa's treatment of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is more direct than that of the *Mahābhārata*, since, as we have already begun to notice, he makes frequent reference to the life of the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s main hero. Johnston picks up on the *Buddhacarita*'s closing colophon, where the poet writes of himself as "Aśvaghoṣa of Sāketa" [i.e., Ayodhyā],[39] for a likely explanation:

> The case is entirely different with the *Rāmāyaṇa*, for which an inhabitant of Sāketa, the scene of its most poignant episodes and the

38. Sullivan, who discusses this and a similar verse in Aśvaghoṣa's *Saundarananda* (7.30), considers Kāśisundarī to have been Ambikā herself, but this is a more unlikely solution since Ambikā would have had to confront Vyāsa directly to have (in Sullivan's words) so "decisively rejected" him (1990*b*, 291), and since the verse is intended as inspiration in the arts of seduction.

39. Johnston 2004, Part 3, 124. Cf. Lamotte 656: "a native of Sāketa who had converted to Buddhism."

> capital of its dynasty, could not but keep a warm place in his heart, however his religious beliefs had changed. Aśvaghoṣa never tires of reminding us that the Buddha belonged to the dynasty of his home and strikes this note in the very first verse of the *Buddhacarita*.[40]

From this no doubt important point, Johnston turns to "enquire to what extent he [Aśvaghoṣa] knew the poem in its present form" (2004, xlviii), favoring the view of Andrzej Gawronski, who, he says, has

> . . . proved conclusively, as I hold, that Aśvaghoṣa knew certain portions of the second book, the Ayodhyakāṇḍa, in very much the condition that we have them in today and that he took pleasure in drawing a comparison between the Buddha quitting his home and Rāma leaving for the forest. That he knew the continuation of the story is proved from a reference in *B.*, xxciii. 31 [concerning the bad precedent, just cited, of Rāvaṇa's doomed infatuation with Sītā], but whether in the present form or not is not clear from the wording. It certainly does seem that there are many future passages in the later books likely to have influenced the Buddhist poet. . . . The question really turns on whether Aśvaghoṣa knew some or all of the passages in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, describing how Hanumān visited Rāvaṇa's palace and saw the women asleep. (Johnston 2004, xlviii)

In fact, Gawronski limited his discussion to *Rāmāyaṇa* Book 2 because he found the parallels more direct there and a larger comparison too unwieldy (1919, 27–28); he felt enabled "to conclude with a sufficient amount of certainty that at the time of Aśvaghoṣa there existed at least Book II of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (but most probably the remaining genuine books also) in much the same form as is known to us today" (40). Gawronski flagged most of the Book 2 passages that I will discuss. As to the well-known *kāvya* question of the similarities between Hanumān's viewing the sleeping women in Rāvaṇa's palace and the *Buddhacarita*'s sleeping harem scene on the night of the Buddha's great departure, Johnston says he "will refrain from giving a definite answer" until there is a *Rāmāyaṇa* critical edition (2004, xlvii). On this matter, Brockington takes a favorable view, as do I, of V. Raghavan's demonstration (1956) that Aśvaghoṣa borrows the harem scene from *Sundarakāṇḍa* 5.7–9, "including parallels in wording" (Brockington 1998, 485).

Beyond these probably unnecessary cautions, Johnston makes some interesting observations about intratextual intricacies: that there is a problem with

40. Johnston 2004, xlvii. See also *BC* 10.23; 13.1 (implied); 14.92; 17.6.

whether Viśvāmitra is seduced by Ghṛtācī, as Aśvaghoṣa has it along with a verse in *Rāmāyaṇa* Book 4, or Menakā, who is the seductress in the story in *Rāmāyaṇa* Book 1;[41] and that Aśvaghoṣa would seem to have needed the *Rāmopākhyāna* to explain why he has Vāmadeva and Vasiṣṭha visit Rama in the forest (Johnston 2004, xlix–l). But these cautions and conundrums have to do not with the heart of Aśvaghoṣa's interests in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but with his selective pattern of making allusions as ultimately negative precedents, which I have already discussed. The heart of the matter is, as Johnston puts it, that Aśvaghoṣa "took pleasure in drawing a comparison between the Buddha quitting his home and Rāma leaving for the forest" (xlviii). Indeed, the *Buddhacarita* has this much in common with the Pāli *Vessantara Jāṭaka*, which, as Gombrich (1985) shows, involves detailed but more indirect correspondences not between Rāma and the Buddha, but between Rāma and the Buddha in has very last life as Prince Vessantara.[42]

For Aśvaghoṣa, however, it is not just a matter of poetic pleasure (such as might be the case in drawing from the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s sleeping harem scene), as Johnston seems to imply. What interests Aśvaghoṣa is the opportunity Rāma's departure offers to draw a contrast between Brahmanical *dharma* and Buddhist *dharma*. Taking into account only the first fourteen cantos of the *Buddhacarita* (those for which we have extant Sanksrit texts), the prince, up to his enlightenment, has no less than thirteen interlocutors with whom he hones his views on *dharma*: (*a*) his charioteer, through the first three signs (*BC* 3.26–65); (*b*) Udāyin (4.9–23, 56–99); (*c*) the Śramaṇa who appears as the fourth sign (5.9–21); (*d*) a "nobleman's daughter" (*rājakanyā*), elsewhere[43] known as Kisā Gotamī, whose words of praise upon seeing his return from the fourth sign crystallize his silent resolve to pursue "the means to final *nirvāṇa* (*parinirvāṇavidhau matiṃ cakāra*)" and "the imperishable *dharma*" (5.23–26); (*e*) his father (5.27–46, this being the only point where he addresses his son directly); (*f*) the horse Kanthaka[44] (5.68–72, a one-way conversation in which the prince voices his readiness for the great departure after the Akaniṣṭha deities have arranged the sleeping harem scene); (*g*) his groom Chandaka (6.1–52, when the prince sends

41. For the first, Johnston 2004, xlix gives *Rām* 4.35.7, which is 4.34.7 in the Baroda Critical Edition; the second is CE 1.62.4–13. As Lefeber 1994, 289 notes, some commentators identify the two Apsarases as one and the same.

42. Gombrich astutely suggests that this deflection to a previous life "reflects the hostility of Theravāda Buddhism (though the *VJ* story was not confined to the Theravāda) to the values embodied in the *Rām*," and agrees with Heinz Bechert (1979, 28) that this would further have to do with the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s being "unacceptable to the Sinhalese because it contradicts their view of the island's history"—especially in *Rāmāyaṇa* Book 6. Aśvaghoṣa would not have this Laṅkan problem with Vālmīki.

43. And in different circumstances; see the *Nidānakathā* version in Warren 1998, 59.

44. Aśvaghoṣa speaks of it as King Śuddhodana's horse, which he has ridden in battle (*BC* 5.75). It is not born, along with the groom, at the same time as the Buddha, as in the *Nidānakathā* (see Warren 1998, 48).

him home after making the great departure);[45] (*h*) the anchorites of a Bhārgava penance grove, there with their wives (7.1–58); (*i*) the Purohita or chaplain (9.81–51); and (*j*) the Minister,[46] jointly sent by the king to the penance grove to speak for him and the Ikṣvāku line (9.4); (*k*) Śreṇya-Bimbisara, king of Magadha (10.22–11.71); (*l*) Arāḍa Kālāma (12.1–83); and (*m*) Māra (13.1–69).

In at least four of these cases, Aśvaghoṣa relates the prince's departure *directly* to the *Rāmāyaṇa* (or in the fourth case possibly to the *Rāmopākhyāna*). First and foremost, King Śuddhodana compares his grief to that of "Daśaratha friend of Indra," and envies Daśaratha for going to heaven when Rāma did not return (*BC* 8.79–91): "Thus the king grieved over the separation from his son and lost his steadfastness, though it was innate like the solidity of the earth; and as if in delirium, he uttered many laments, like Daśaratha overwhelmed by grief for Rāma" (*BC* 8.81). Grief (*śoka*) is of course the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s underlying *sthāyibhāva* or "stable aesthetic emotion" in relation to *karuṇā*, "pity" as its predominant aesthetic flavor (*aṅgī rasa*),[47] and it characterizes King Śuddhodana's feelings for his son throughout the *Buddhacarita*.[48] Second, the groom Chandaka says, "I cannot abandon you as Sumantra did Rāghava" (6.36). Third, when he *and* the riderless horse return, the townsfolk "shed tears in the road, as happened of old when the chariot of Daśaratha's son returned" (8.8). Fourth, as already noted, the chaplain (*purohita*) and minister are compared, as emissaries, to Vāmadeva and Vasiṣṭha visiting Rāma in the forest (9.9).

But there are also indirect allusions to the Rāma story. Indeed, if the two emissaries seem to step into their roles with *Rāmāyaṇa* echoes,[49] the same can be said of the prince's encounter with the many Ṛṣis who dwell in a penance grove *together with their wives* (*BC* 7.3). I would propose that Aśvaghoṣa builds up this scene to represent the *vānaprastha* mode of life idealized in the forest books of both epics,[50] but especially in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where Rāma is relayed between Vedic sages, one of whom, Atri, is explicitly ensconced in the forest with his wife Anasūyā.[51] In any case, the prince's descent in the

45. Assuming that Chandaka is different from the unnamed charioteer.

46. *BC* 9.52–79, referred to, when the prince dismisses them, as *tau havyamantrākṛtau*, "the officers who were in charge of the king's sacrifices and his counsel chamber" (*BC* 10.1).

47. See my discussion in Hiltebeitel 2008*a*.

48. See *BC* 1.76 (Śuddhodana warned not to grieve over his son's inevitable enlightenment); 6.19–20 (with likely *Rām* echoes in the prince's reference to the road of his [Ikṣvāku] ancestors) and 6.30–31 (Chandaka's response); and especially 9.13–15, 9.29 (as aired by the Purohita, whom the prince answers on this point at 9.33–35). Meanwhile others also grieve throughout Canto 8 (*śoka* is mentioned twelve times there) when it is realized that the prince has not returned with Chandaka and Kanthaka.

49. They are not found in the *Nidānakathā*.

50. See Biardeau 2002, vol. 2, 70–71, 75–76, 82 on these often married forest hermits, their hospitality to epic princes, and their probably prior portrayal as well in the *dharmasūtras*.

51. See chapter 10, §§ A and B, chapter 12 § F.

Rāmāyaṇa's dynastic lineage is certainly invoked when the teats of the ashram cows in this "workshop as it were of *dharma*"[52] flow upon first seeing the prince as "the lamp of the Ikṣvāku race" (7.6)! Further, while each of these thirteen interlocutors voices or hears words in the prince's presence, his abandoned wife Yaśodharā's words in his absence are, I think, also spoken in evocation of Sītā's lonely soliloquies in the absence of Rāma (see chapter 10 § D):

> If he wishes to carry out *dharma* and yet casts me off, his lawful partner in the duties of religion and now husbandless, in what respect is there *dharma* for him who wishes to follow austerities separated from his lawful partner?
>
> Surely he has not heard of our ancestors, Mahasudarśa and the other kings of old, who took their wives with them to the forest, since he thus intends to carry out *dharma* without me.[53]

Whoever Mahāsudarśa may be,[54] Yaśodharā would count Rāma among her husband's Ikṣvāku ancestors. This thread of direct and indirect *Rāmāyaṇa* evocations comes to a decisive climax, in a passage cited earlier, when the prince tells his father's Purohita and Minister emissaries that Rāma is not an authority (*pramāṇam*) on *dharma* (9.77).

For now, it must suffice to note that Aśvaghoṣa finds seven of the thirteen champions of Brahmanical *dharma*—the father, the groom, the riderless horse (rather than the empty chariot), the two emissaries, the wife, and the anchorites (with their cows)—suitable, even if at a stretch, for evocations of the Rāma story. It would take more space than it merits to demonstrate that, even beyond these seven, all thirteen speak for one or another form Brahmanical *dharma*—including, as we shall see, Māra. Suffice it to say that through the run of *Rāmāyaṇa* precedents that ends with the prince dismissing them, it is, from early on, the "variegated *dharma* (*dharmaṃ vividham*)" (*BC* 2.54) performed by

52. *B* 7.33; see Johnston 2004, 98 n. 33, crediting Garwonski 1919, 14–15 on this reading, but I think a little too quickly dismissing his extension of the image to mean "forge, smithy," making the penance grove "like a forge of *dharma* in full activity (*dharmasya karmāntam iva pravṛttam*)."

53. *BC* 8.61: *sa mām anāthāṃ sahadharmacāriṇīm/ apāsya dharmaṃ yadi kartum icchati/kuto 'sya dharmaḥ sahadharmacāriṇīṃ/vinā tapo yaḥ paribhoktum icchati//62. śṛṇoti nūnaṃ sa na pūrvapārthivān/ mahāsudarśaprabhṛtīn pitāmahān/vanāni patnīsahitān upeyuṣas/ tathā hi dharmam madṛte cikīrṣati.*

Gawronski 1919, 35–36 remarks that the previous lines 8.55–58 of Yaśodharā's lament and her contrast of "the easy life he has enjoyed thus far and the drawbacks of dwelling in a hermitage" have another *Rāmāyaṇa* parallel, but the words there are Daśaratha's, the verses occur in a long interpolation (*Rām* 2, Appendix 1, No. 9, lines 180–87), and the theme is perhaps rather a cliché.

54. Johnston 2004, 117 says he "is presumably the Mahāsudassana of the genealogies of the Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa." I am not sure one can rule out the subject of the *Mahāsudassana Sutta* (*DN* 17), whom the Buddha recalls as one of this former lives (see Gethin 2006).

King Śuddhodana as a *śāstra*-pondering king—one who, among other duties, has just secured the continuance of his royal line through the birth of his son (2.52–53)—that anchors all these Brahmanical concerns. The ultimate irony of this portrayal of Brahmanical royal *dharma* by a Buddhist poet comes across when Chandaka appeals that the prince should not abandon his loving father "like a heretic abandoning the true *dharma*" (*saddharmam iva nāstikaḥ*; 6.31d). Chandaka's words rather yield the inadvertent message that, if the prince were to rejoin his father, he would be a "nay-sayer" *to* "the true *dharma*" by abandoning it before finding it.

This *Rāmāyaṇa*-related nexus runs mainly through the *Buddhacarita*'s first nine cantos. Indeed, the only continuation I can see in later cantos comes after the Buddha's enlightenment, when "The seers of the Ikṣvāku race who had been rulers of men, the royal seers and the great seers, filled with wonder and joy at his achievement, stood in their mansions in the heavens reverencing him" (*BC* 14.92). What a lovely twist to leave us wondering whether Rāma is among them! Within this *Rāmāyaṇa* skein, there seem to be two sets of concerns, each with numerous subsidiary considerations: *gṛhasthadharma*, or the duties of a householder; and priorities regarding the second and third stages of life as they bear upon kings in the scheme of *āśramadharma*, the ideal sequence of the four stages of life—a term not used in the first half of the *Buddhacarita*, but one whose currency is certainly implied, as when King Śuddhodana tells the prince not to violate their "proper order."[55] This of course means that the two concerns intersect, since according to the classical formulation of the *āśrama* system (Olivelle 1993, 27, 30), the householder mode is the second life-stage.

We see this intersection from the *Buddhacarita*'s first mention of *gṛhasthadharma*, which, fittingly, comes right when King Śuddhodana first faces his son's determination to abandon both home and his succession to the throne, and thus frames the issue as one of royal *dharma*. Says the father to the son:

> But, O lover of *dharma*, it is now my time for *dharma*, after I have
> devolved the sovereignty onto you, the cynosure of all eyes; but if you
> were to forcibly quit your father (*gurum*), O firmly courageous one,
> your *dharma* would become *adharma*.

55. *BC* 5.32. See Olivelle 1993, 121 and n. 30, so translating *vikrama* at 5.32c, and commenting that Johnston's translation "misses the point." Cf. Olivelle 2008, 137: "the right order." See also 10.33, discussed in the text.

> Therefore give up this your resolve. Devote yourself for the present to householder *dharma* (*bhava tāvan nirato gṛhasthadharme*). For entry to the penance grove is agreeable to a man, after he has enjoyed the delights of youth.[56]

Note that "entry to the penance grove" (*tapovanapraveśa*) is also used for the forest-dwelling anchorites when they return to their "*dharma* workshop" at 7.58. This suggests that the term characterizes the third life-stage of the "forest-dweller" or *vānaprastha* (even though the text does not mention the term), and that King Śuddhodana, at least, conceives the tension between him and his son as one to be worked out between the "*dharmas*" of the second and third life-stages, and not the second and the fourth. This is so even after the prince hears the "nobleman's daughter" utter the ambiguous word *nirvṛtā*—by which she is describing the woman who would be "blessed" (Johnston 2004, 66) or "happy" to have such a husband as he, but which fills him with the "supreme calm (*śamaṃ param*)" that inspires him to win *parinirvāṇa* (5.24–25)—and tells his father that he has decided to seek *mokṣa* (5.28), preferring that to the word *nirvāṇa*, which is not used elsewhere in the first fourteen cantos to describe the prince's quest for it. Almost perversely, King Śuddhodana avoids talking in such terms and, in the passage just cited, immediately rephrases his son's resolve into a premature decision for the penance grove and the implied *vānaprastha-dharma*. Indeed, King Śuddhodana carries his seemingly deliberate misunderstanding to an offer to go to the forest rather than his son.[57] This matter of untimely *dharma* being *adharma* percolates along through the prince's interactions with Chandaka (6.21), the king's two Brahmin emissaries (9.14–17; 9.53), and even Śreṇya Bimbisāra (10.33), and gives the prince several opportunities to trump these Brahmanical concerns for the inherent timeliness of *āśramadharma* with Buddhist rejoinders that "there is no such thing as a wrong time for *dharma*" (6.21; cf. 9.37–38, 11.62–63). On the whole, such concerns parallel the situation in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which does not concern its hero with any inclination toward *mokṣa* or the fourth life-stage of renunciation (*saṃnyāsa*).[58]

56. *BC* 5.32. *mama tu priya dharma dharmakālas/ tvayi lakṣmīm avasṛjya lakṣmabhūte/sthiravikramavikrameṇa dharmas/ tava hitvā tu guruṃ bhaved adharmaḥ//* 33. *tad imaṃ vyavasāyam utsṛja/ tvaṃ bhava tāvan nirato gṛhasthadharme/puruṣasya vahaḥsukhāni bhuktvā/ ramaṇīyo tapovanapraveśaḥ.*

57. *BC* 5.32. On abdication by kings in favor of their sons, see Olivelle 1993, 116: "The epics contain numerous accounts of famous kings who followed this custom" (with citations, n. 15).

58. This would be one reason why the *Rāmāyaṇa* has little to say about the *āśrama* system. Finding only one reference (*Rām* 2.98.58), which leads him to think it would be an interpolation, Olivelle 1993, 103 supposes that the *Rāmāyaṇa* would be older than this system, but his dates (pre-fifth-century BCE) for the *Rāmāyaṇa* were at that point far too early.

Yet the prince begins to break past this *Rāmāyaṇa* scenario in the penance grove when he tells the anchorites that one of the reasons he does not stay with them is that their practice of *tapas* yields merely "Paradise."[59] Unlike King Śuddhodana, the anchorites know what he is talking about and tell him that if he prefers release (which they call both *mokṣa* and *apavarga*, what is beyond the *trivarga*) over Paradise (7.52–53), he should seek out Arāḍa Kālāma. They clearly know of a fourth stage of life. With this, we put the *Rāmāyaṇa* behind us and turn to Aśvaghoṣa's treatment of the *Mahābhārata*, in which all four life-patterns are a matter of major scrutiny and debate.

This returns us to the matter of dating the *Mahābhārata* relative to the *dharmasūtras* and *Manu*. As Olivelle shows, the *Mahābhārata* knows the *āśramas* both in their "original system" (1993, 153–55) known to the *dharmasūtras*, where they are four different lifelong choices (*vikalpa*) to be made before marriage, and in their "classical system" (148–51) favored (though not exclusively) by *Manu* (129), which staggers the four through a male's life (see chapter 5 § E). I think that in airing both systems, the *Mahābhārata* brings them under debate such as Olivelle himself mentions (69–70), taking them up au courant with their prior treatment in the earlier *dharmasūtras* some time between 150 BCE and the turn of the millennium, and probably soon before *Manu* further codifies them. The *Buddhacarita*'s view that there is no wrong time for *dharma* then looks to be a typically Buddhist expression of the pro-choice position that *Manu*, unlike the *dharmasūtras* and *Mahābhārata*, seeks so energetically to suppress (Olivelle 1993, 131–36, 147, 176). Indeed, while making a negative evaluation of this position, the *Mahābhārata* includes a prophesy to King Māndhātar by Viṣṇu in the guise of Indra that would seem to link free choice of āśramas (*āśramāṇāṃ vikalpāḥ*) with the proliferation of Buddhists (*bhikṣavo liṅginas tathā*) after the passing of the Kṛta *yuga* (*Mbh* 12.65.25). In any case, I do not share Olivelle's 1993 acceptance of a period of eight centuries of *Mahābhārata* composition (148), or, as will become clear in what now follows, his view of the "admittedly late didactic sections of the *Mahābhārata*" (161). And indeed, Olivelle seems recently to have been rethinking these very matters (2005a, 5–6, 23–24, 37–38).

F. The *Buddhacarita* and the *Mahābhārata*

Johnston sees the *Mahābhārata* as posing different problems from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, proposing that Aśvaghoṣa might know it in a form no longer

59. *Divam, svarga*; *BC* 7.18–26, 48–53. That *svarga* is a this-worldly condition is emphasized from the beginning when we learn that King Śuddhodana's kingdom was like *svarga* to his subjects upon his son's birth (*BC* 2.12–13).

available to us (2004, xlvi), perhaps even in an early "*kāvya* form, which is now irretrievably lost to us,"[60] and noting that, "As for proper names, allusions to the main characters are very thin" (xlvi–xlvii). Johnston is certainly right that the *Buddhacarita* is nearly silent on the *Mahābhārata*'s main story. The text does not mention Arjuna, Yudhiṣṭhira, Draupadī, Duryodhana, Karṇa, and so on. And given that fact, we can go even a little beyond Johnston and say that Aśvaghoṣa is not really interested in touching base with any of this epic's high dramas, as he is with Rāma's departure from Ayodhyā. Yet Aśvaghoṣa does refer to "the entire destruction of the Kurus" at *BC* 11.31; "to Bhīṣma for a story known to the *Harivaṃśa* but not to the epic" at 11.18, once again suggesting a surprisingly early awareness of the *Harivaṃśa*;[61] to Pāṇḍu and Mādrī at 4.79; and to "many legends . . . found in the *MBh*, but not always in quite the same form" (xlvii). Curiously, Johnston neglects to mention references to Vyāsa and Kṛṣṇa, most of which I have noted, and which have one point of interest in that several of them come, combined with similar *Rāmāyaṇa* references, near the *Buddhacarita*'s beginning and end,[62] where we might consider them as points for his readers' entry and departure, or as figures whom Aśvaghoṣa references to frame his text.

Yet once we look past the allusions and negative precedents, we find that Aśvaghoṣa engages the *Mahābhārata* for much the same reason as the *Rāmāyaṇa*: his interest in the relation between Buddhist and Brahmanical *dharma* in connection with questions that bear on the prince's great departure. But now the discourse is taken to a higher register: from the constraints of the prince's tussle with his father over the royal protocols for *gṛhasthadharma* and the ascetic regimes of the forest-dweller, we move on to the search for "the true *dharma*." From the time that the anchorites in the penance grove tell the prince to seek out Arāḍa Kālāma through his meetings en route with his father's two emissaries and King Śreṇya-Bimbisāra of Magadha, and finally, after his meeting with Arāḍa and the period the prince performs penances, the challenge of Māra, the prince's quest for *mokṣa* takes hold. And with it, we find what I would propose are two kinds of close but indirect readings of the *Mahābhārata*: one concerning some of its "didactic" teachings mainly about *mokṣa*,[63] and one

60. Johnston 2004, xlvii; I would just remark that this type of explanation leads us nowhere.

61. See Johnston 2004, xlvii, 152. Bhīṣma himself tells of slaying Ugrāyudha, who killed many Pañcālas and demanded Bhīṣma's "mother" Satyavatī, called Gandhakālī here, after Bhīṣma's father Śaṃtanu died (*HV* 15.28–68). Again, a distinctive story suggests a reference to the *Harivaṃśa* as a *text*. Cf. chapters 7 § A and 12 §§ A and C on what could be still earlier references to the *Harivaṃśa* in the *Yuga Purāṇa*.

62. On Vyāsa, see not only *BC* 1.42 but also 4.16 (discussed above) and 4.76 (implied); on Kṛṣṇa see 1.45, 28.28–29.

63. The term *nirvāṇa* is barely used in the first half of the *Buddhacarita*.

referencing an early *Mahābhārata* episode that I have already mentioned, the killing of Jarāsaṃdha, king of Magadha.[64] Let us look first at the latter.

F.1. Entering Magadha

Despite the anchorites' admonition that the prince should head north to pursue the highest *dharma*, and take not a step toward the south (*BC* 7.41), he proceeds south into the Magadha capital of Rājagṛha, ruled by Bimbisāra, on his way toward Arāḍa Kālāma's hermitage in the Vindhyas.[65] Certain verses describing his approach are interesting:

> 6. On seeing him, the gaudily-dressed felt ashamed and the chatterers on the roadside fell silent; as in the presence of Dharma incarnate none think thoughts not directed to the way of salvation, so no one indulged in improper thoughts. ("No one had an improper thought,[66] as if they were in the presence of dharma in physical form." Olivelle 2008, 181)
>
> 9. And Rājagṛha's Goddess of Fortune was perturbed on seeing him, who was worthy of ruling the earth and was yet in a *bhikṣu*'s robe, with the circle of hair between his brows, with the long eyes, radiant body and hands that were beautifully webbed.[67]

For the very first time, Aśvaghoṣa describes the prince as "dressed," or "disguised," as a *bhikṣu* (*bhikṣuveṣam*), just like the *śramaṇa* who appeared before him in that guise as the fourth sign. Indeed, that it was a guise for the *śramaṇa* is emphasized in the *Nidānakathā*, which remarks that it was a sign of things to come sent from the gods, since there were no *bhikkhus* at the time of the fourth sign's appearance (Warren 1998, 57). Along his way, the prince

64. See briefly chapters 5 § G, 7 § A.1, 12 § F. Jarāsaṃdha must be eliminated before Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya, since he stands in the way of that ritual's objective of establishing universal sovereignty over other kings.

65. *BC* 7.57; see 7.58: leaving the penance grove, he "proceeded on his way," presumably, as pointed out to him, toward Arāḍa's hermitage at Vindhyakoṣṭha (7.54), which Johnston locates in the Vindhyas, noting evidence that the Vindhyas may have been the site of a Sāṃkhya school associated with the name Vindhyavāsin (2004, 102, n. 54), whom Larson and Bhattacharya date to ca. 300–400 CE (1987, 15, 143). Arāḍa/Ārāḍa never seems that far south in other sources.

66. Johnston's "not directed to the way of salvation" is just paraphrase.

67. *BC* 10.6. *taṃ jihriyuḥ prekṣya vicitraveṣāḥ/ prakīrṇavacaḥ pathi maunam īyuḥ/dharmasya sākṣād iva saṃnikarṣe/ na kaścid anyāyamatir babhūva//*. . . 9. *dṛṣṭvā va sorṇabhruvam āyatākṣaṃ/ jvalacharīraṃ śubhajālahastam/ tam bhikṣuveṣaṃ kṣitipālanārhaṃ/ saṃcuksubhe rājagṛhasya lakṣmīḥ.*

stills the improper thoughts of those who see him appear "like Dharma incarnate" or "like dharma in physical form." Since we have established that Aśvaghoṣa is writing for both Brahmanical and Buddhist audiences, I feel no need to arbitrate here between a mythological Dharma and an impersonal *dharma*. If the former implies some hint of a divine plan, that would be consonant with the chastened thoughts being those not only of the city's bon vivants but of Rājagṛha's Goddess of Fortune (*lakṣmī*), who understands that, despite the *bhikṣu* dress or guise, the Bodhisattva is fit to rule the earth. When Bimbisāra, who might thus have reasons for concern, sees him too from a palace balcony, he orders an officer to report on the prince's movements. The prince moves calmly, now begging for food apparently for the first time—that it is the first time is suggested in the *Nidānakathā*, where he has to force down some almsfood that is disgusting (see Nakamura 2000, 124–25)—accepting what comes to him without distinction. Taking his meal at a lonely rivulet (Aśvaghoṣa does not, like the *Nidānakathā*, have him nearly vomit), from there he climbs Mount Pāṇḍava (*BC* 10.13–14). Hearing of this destination, Bimbisāra, who is now described as *pāṇḍavatulyavīryaḥ*—which Johnston translates, "in heroism the peer of Pāṇḍu's son," but which can better be simplified to "in heroism equal to a Pāṇḍava" or "equal in valor to the Pāṇḍavas" (Olivelle 2008, 85)—then ascends the same Pāṇḍava Mountain (17), where he sees the *Bodhisattva* (18) sitting "in majestic beauty and tranquility like some being magically projected by Dharma" (*taṃ rūpalakṣmyā ca śamena cāiva dharmasya nirmaṇam ivopaviṣṭam*; 19). Or, quite sufficiently put: "He sat with calm and resplendent beauty, like the image of dharma" (Olivelle 2008, 185).

Although I have found no one who has given it a moment's notice, Buddhist tradition itself thus makes one of the five peaks of Rājagṛha, or at least part of one of them, the Pāṇḍava Mountain. This is the case already in the *Suttanipāta*, from the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, which, usually accepted as part of the Pāli canon, is certainly older than Aśvaghoṣa, and seems to be a basis for the more developed account mentioning the same mountain in the *Nidānakathā*.[68] The latter is ascribed to the fifth-century AD, although Johnston thinks that Aśvaghoṣa "may be presumed to have used an earlier version [of it], no longer in existence" (2004, xl), as one of his sources. In the *Mahābhārata*, not surprisingly, there is no mountain by that name. Rather, when Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna, and Bhīma approach Magadha to kill Jarāsaṃdha and reach a certain Mount Goratha, they set eyes

68. See Nakamura 2000, 122, 124; Thomas [1927] 2000, 68. Mount Pāṇḍava is also a stable fixture in *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṃghabhedavāstu, being the seventeenth and Last Section of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins* (Strong 2001, 14) and the *Lalitavistara* (to judge from Poppe 1967, 134).

on "Magadha city" (*Mbh* 2.18.30), which Kṛṣṇa describes as having "five beautiful mountains: the wide Vaihāra, Varāha, Vṛṣabha, Ṛṣigiri, and Caityaka" that "stand guard over Girivraja."[69] We note the *Mahābhārata*'s name for the city is Girivraja, not Rājagṛha.[70] The *Mahābhārata* means by this name not just the Magadha capital but the "mountain corral" (*giri-vraja*) where Jarāsaṃdha keeps eighty-six of the world's hundred kings imprisoned (see Biardeau 2002, vol. 1, 327).

Buddhist tradition thus references the Pāṇḍavas, and one may assume the *Mahābhārata*, and in all likelihood the Jarāsaṃdha episode, when it has the prince cross the Pāṇḍavas' tracks on Pāṇḍava Mountain.[71] From this, the most straightforward assumption would be that the Buddhists have named as "Pāṇḍava Mountain" the mountain, or at least part of the mountain, that Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna, and Bhīma ascend: the Caityaka Peak, as seems to be borne out by details supplied by H. W. Schumann.[72] Yet Aśvaghoṣa goes beyond other Buddhist sources in describing the Bodhisattva's trek here. And though it is not a matter one can demonstrate with a perfect parallel fit, it seems from some of Aśvaghoṣa's new themes, similes, and points of emphasis that he does so not only out of a residue of folklore but with a *Mahābhārata* "textually" in view.

69. *Mbh* 2.19.2–3. As noted by Brockington 2002, 79, a five-verse Southern Recension insertion amplifies the description of the mountains (2.206*, after 2.19.10), but adds nothing noteworthy for our purposes unless perhaps that Caityaka is *giriśreṣṭha*, "the best of peaks" (line 2), and that the five are now numbered as Pāṇḍara (presumably Vṛṣabha, unless, perhaps under Buddhist influence, this interpolation is trying to find an alternate place for an intentionally disguised or just garbled "Pāṇḍava" mountain), Vipula, Vārāha, Caityaka, and Mātaṅga (Ṛṣigiri); the latter reminding us perhaps of the "untouchable" Ṛṣi Mataṅga of a forest hermitage near Kiṣkindhā in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, who has a splendid mountain named after him at Vijayanagar.

70. Biardeau 2002, 1: 330 introduces a little uncertainty as to whether Girivraja and Rājagṛha are the same, but that they are early and later names for at least parts of the same city seems well enough established. See van Buitenen 1975, 15–16; Lamotte 1988, 17–18; Schumann 1989, 90. The *Buddhacarita* uses both Rājagṛha (10.1 and 9) and Girivraja (11.73). For the *Mahābhārata* to use only Girivraja is probably an archaism.

71. Indeed, if one assumes that the Buddhist tradition works from oral Magadha stories before the epic's written text—one would presumably have to presume a proto-*Jarāsaṃdhavadha*—then the *Suttanipāta* account may be older than the *Mahābhārata*, since the *Suttanipāta* is thought to present some of the earliest sources on the Buddha legend (Lamotte 1988, 660; Nakamura 2000, 19, 123–24, 131–34; Thomas [1927] 2000, 273). From this standpoint, the *Mahābhārata* would still remain within its game plan if it concealed the name "Pāṇḍava Mountain."

72. That is, by correlating the map in Schumann 1989, 90 with what he says on p. 46: "the Pāṇḍava hill, the north-easterly of the five hills surrounding Rājagaha." The map names *six* mountains around "Old Rājagaha or Giribbaja": Vaibhara to the west, Vipula north, Rama northeast, Chattha with the Vulture Peak to the east, Udaya southeast, and Sona southwest. Chattha Mountain would thus be in the right position to be both the likely alternate for Caityaka and another name for Pāṇḍava, although the map does not show this latter name. Note that Vaibhara is the only other mountain with a similar name in both texts. Rājagṛha became the site of "eighteen vast monasteries" (Lamotte 1988, 17–18 (19)—presumably *vihāras*, from which comes also the name Bihar). *Lodhra* trees cover the Pāṇḍava Mountain (*BC* 10.15), or all five peaks (*Mbh* 2.19.4).

Rather than go over the Jarāsaṃdha episode in detail, as several have done,[73] I present the following chart of parallels and oppositions, which should suffice to give a basic idea of why a journey of two Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa to Magadha would have interested Buddhists before Aśvaghoṣa. Further, by accenting what appear to be Aśvaghoṣa's most important innovations in bold face,[74] it should afford a basic idea of what interested him in the *Mahābhārata*'s *Jarāsaṃdhavadha* episode in particular. I suggest that one first read the unaccented sequence that reflects the prior Buddhist story (items 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, and 14), and then the whole alignment (charted on the next two pages) to see what Aśvaghoṣa seems to have made of it.

The first thing worth noting is that Aśvaghoṣa introduces an epic tone. Magadha's goddess of Fortune or Lakṣmī shows her favor on the prince (item *BC* 5), and Bimbisāra challenges the prince to take up arms against his foes with Bimbisāra as an ally (item *BC* 12). The challenge is particularly gratuitous, and when it is noticed that Bimbisāra makes it upon seeing the prince in the guise of a *bhikṣu*, one gets a good index that Aśvaghoṣa is taking the Pāṇḍavas' bath-graduate guises as his epic touchstone (see items *Mbh* 2, 5, 10, 12).[75] In each case it is a matter of responding to a challenge posed by thinly disguised Kṣatriyas: in one case three Kṣatriyas disguised as *snātakas* (admittedly Kṣatriya ones but adopting a predominantly Brahmin role);[76] in the other a prince in a mendicant garb that some texts, including some passages in the *Mahābhārata*, say should

73. See Biardeau 2002, vol. 1, 324–54 and vol. 2, 755–58, for her most recent discussion; Brockington 2002; van Buitenen 1975, 11–18; Hiltebeitel 1989, 2005*b*. I am not persuaded by Brockington's method of dating the whole episode as "late" and "added": he seems to accept the criterion of "grounds of content" [73], and includes among his own criteria, "starting from the premise that [it] . . . is anomalous" [74], that it is "extraneous to the plot of the MBh" [80], and, as is most symptomatic of this method, observing that it "reflects relatively late Vaiṣṇava–Śaiva opposition" [82]). Nonetheless, he proposes for its composition an "immediately post Mauryan" Śuṅga date (2002, 84–85) of "the later part of the 2nd century or, perhaps most probably, the first century B.C." (86). Such a date for me is not, however, late; rather, it is attractive for the larger *Mahābhārata* archetype, parts and whole, which, as Brockington mentions (79), includes the episode (see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 20–31; 2011*a*, chapters 4 and 5).

74. In these determinations, I have consulted the treatment in other versions in Nakamura 2000, 120–24; Thomas [1927] 2000, 68–70; Strong 2001, 10–18; and Poppe 1967, 133–42. On the other hand, it is fascinating to see how *all* of Aśvaghoṣa's clearly "Indian" nuances are lost in the Sanskrit-to-Chinese translation; see Beal 1968, 111–19.

75. This garb could also have more indirect *Rāmāyaṇa* echoes, since both Rāvaṇa 3.44.8; 47.6) and Hanumān (4.3.8; 3.21; 5.14) make rather famous turning-point appearances "in the form of a *bhikṣu* (*bhikṣurūpa*)."

76. See chapter 5 § G on *snātakas* in connection with this episode. Cf. Olivelle 1993, 220–21: A *snātaka* "is considered so sacred and his status so eminent, that many authorities give him precedence over even a king: if a king meets him on the road it is the king who should salute the latter with respect" (with citations). Van Buitenen actually wonders whether "the meaning of *snātaka* might be extended to anyone under a studious vow of life, and to include the new mendicants who followed the Buddha or Jīna, but that cannot be made out" (1975, 17).

Buddhacarita [*BC*]	*Mahābhārata* [*Mbh*]
1. The prince enters the city of the five hills (10.2).	1. Kṛṣṇa and the two Pāṇḍavas, Bhīma and Arjuna, approach the city of five hills.
2. The prince makes his first appearance dressed (or disguised) as a *bhikṣu* (9).	2. Following Kṛṣṇa's counsel, the three are disguised as *snātaka* Brahmins (2.18.21).
3. **He seems to onlookers like Dharma incarnate/like *dharma* in physical form (6).**	3. In Kṛṣṇa is prudent policy (*naya, nīti*), in Bhīma strength, in Arjuna victory (14.9, 18.3). Prudent policy turns out to have been tricky *dharma* (see item 14 below).
4. First amazed (*visismiye*), onlookers then fall still and silent and have no unruly thoughts (*anyāyamatir*) (2–6).	4. Onlookers "fell to wondering" (*vismayaḥ samajāyata*) (19.27) and are at first baffled.
5. **The city's Lakṣmī shows favor on the prince (9).**	5. Kṛṣṇa soon reveals that Śrī favors Kṣatriya *snātaka*s who wear garlands (19.46).
6. The prince climbs Pāṇḍava Mountain (14). After receiving a report of his ascent, so does King Bimbisāra, **"in heroism equal to a Pāṇḍava"** (17).	6. The two Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa climb Caityaka Mountain.
7. **There Bimbisāra sees the tranquil cross-legged Bodhisattva "being as it were a horn (*śṛṅgabhūtam*) of the mountain"** (18).	7. There they destroy the "horn" (*śṛṅgam*) of Caityaka Mountain (19.18).
8. Bimbisāra thus shows deference and hospitality by coming to the mountain.	8. The two Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa come to King Jarāsaṃdha's palace, where they reject his hospitality (19.34).
9. **The prince looks to the king "like some being magically projected by Dharma"/"like the image of dharma"** (19).	9. Jarāsaṃdha asks about the *dharma* of this rejection, and about the trio's disguises.
10. **The king and prince debate about *dharma*: Bimbisāra aligns the *trivarga* with age: pleasure for youth, wealth for middle years, *dharma* for old age** (33–37); **but the prince, seeing danger in old age and death, "resorts to this *dharma* out of longing for release (*mumukṣayā*)"** (11.7). **He should do *kuladharma* and offer sacrifices** (10.39–40); **but he does "not approve of sacrifices" or of "happiness sought at the price of another's suffering"** (11.64–67), **etc.**	10. Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsaṃdha air opposing views of *dharma*: Kṛṣṇa reveals they are Kṣatriya *snātakas*, and hold him as enemy; asking why, Jarāsaṃdha protests himself a ruler by *dharma* (20.3–5). Kṛṣṇa says the trio follows *dharma* in opposing Jarāsaṃdha's plan to sacrifice 100 kings to Rudra (20.9), but Jarāsaṃdha sees it as Kṣatriya *dharma* to treat captives as one pleases (20.26).
11. Bimbisāra offers the prince half his Magadha kingdom (10.25–26), which the prince explicitly rejects (11.49–56).	11. Kṛṣṇa's plan will eliminate Magadha's sovereignty so that Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira can be universal monarch by performing a Rājasūya sacrifice.
12. **Bimbisāra also challenges the prince to fight his foes; moved as he is by compassion at seeing him, a Kṣatriya, in the garb or guise of a mendicant (*bhikṣu*), Bimbisāra would be the prince's ally (10.27–32).**	12. Kṛṣṇa challenges Jarāsaṃdha to fight one of the trio in the guise and garb of bath-graduates, now revealing who they are (20.23–24).
13. **The prince implicitly rejects such a fight.**	13. Jarāsanṃdha chooses to fight Bhīma (21.3), as Kṛṣṇa had devised (20.32–34).

(continued)

(continued)

Buddhacarita [*BC*]	*Mahābhārata* [*Mbh*]
14. The prince promises to come back as a Buddha (11.72–73), at which point he will preach the *dharma* that converts Bimbisāra and many other Magadhans.	14. The freed kings imprisoned in Girivraja, recognize that Kṛṣṇa protects *dharma*, and that he is Viṣṇu (22.31–32).

be restricted to Brahmins.[77] Moreover, Bimbisāra challenges the Bodhisattva precisely while calling attention to his appearance, calling him *bhikṣāśramakāma*, "lover of the mendicant stage of life" (10.33), thereby providing the one instance in the text where *āśrama* clearly means "mode" or "stage of life" rather than "hermitage."[78] Just as King Śuddhodana tells the prince not to go against the "proper order" of the implied *āśramas*, so now Bimbisāra seconds the point with additional unusual arguments correlating the triple set with the life-stages (item *B* 10),[79] and with this specific challenge to the Bodhisattva's appearance as a *bhikṣu*. Both kings are making a "legitimate" point, for they would be speaking as "protectors of *varṇśramadharma*," a role that even Buddhist kings come to play in sixth-century inscriptions (Olivelle 1993, 201–4).

Next, as one would expect of an accomplished *kāvya* poet, Aśvaghoṣa tips his hand further with his similes. To begin with, when the prince has climbed Mount Pāṇḍava, "On that mountain (*avau*),[80] . . . he, the sun of mankind (*nṛsūrya*), appeared in his ochre-colored robe like the sun in the early morning (*bālasūrya*) above the eastern mountain."[81] As Gawronski puts it in the only scholarly note I have found on these matters, "the future Buddha standing on [or, better, ascending] the Pāṇḍava mountain, clad as he is in his red garment, is compared to the rising sun touching the verge of the eastern mountain" (1914–15, 37).

77. See Olivelle 1993, 195 and n. 40, noting that "there are numerous texts in the *Mahābhārata* that declare religious mendicancy to be the special *dharma* of Brahmins: 3.34.49–50; 5.71.3" [both addressed to Yudhiṣṭhira], and pointing to *Mbh* 12.10–25 where this point is made to Yudhiṣṭhira at the beginning of the *Śāntiparvan*. Although never using the compound *bhikṣāśrama*, the *Mahābhārata* sometimes uses *bhikṣu* or *bhikṣuka* to cover the fourth life-stage (12.14.12; 12.37.28; 14.45.13).

78. Aśvaghoṣa could have the precedent of *Gautama Dharmasūtra* 3.1 and 3.11–25 in identifying a Brahmanical "life-stage" with the term *bhikṣu*.

79. Bimbisāra's correlation of three periods of life with the *trivarga* (item 10) is interesting as being not reducible to the *āśrama* system, and as having a counterpart in *Kāmasūtra* 1.2.1–6—but there with different correlations: youth should be devoted to aims (*artha*) such as learning, prime years to *kāma*, and old age to *dharma* and *mokṣa* (see Olivelle 1993, 30–31 n. 85, 133, 218).

80. Gawronski 1914–15, 37 had noted that some word for "mountain" was necessary, and proposed *girau* rather than *vane*, "in the forest," having read the latter in Cowell's edition and translation. See Cowell 1968, 106 and Johnston 2004, 143 n. 15 confirming *avi* as "a certain reading" based on his primary manuscript and the Tibetan translation. Olivelle 2008, 283 reads *avi* as "hill."

81. *BC* 10.15: *tasminnavau lodhravanopagūḍhe/ mayūranādapratipūrṇakuñje//kāṣāyavāsāḥ sa babhau nṛsūryo/ yathodayasyopari bālasūryaḥ*.

That is how Aśvaghoṣa describes what King Bimbisāra's officer sees (10.16), and perhaps what the officer reported back to Bimbisāra. But now, when Bimbisāra himself ascends this same mountain with the heroism of a Pāṇḍava, he sees the tranquil cross-legged Bodhisattva "being as it were a horn (*śṛṅgabhūtam*) of the mountain" (item *BC* 7). That is, the rising sun of mankind has become the "horn" of the very Pāṇḍava Mountain he and Bimbisāra have just climbed. I cannot imagine that Aśvaghoṣa has any other first pretext for introducing[82] this singular, surprising, and somewhat strained simile than a reference to the *Mahābhārata*'s double use of *śṛṅgam* to describe what it is on Caityaka Mountain that the two Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa destroy (items *Mbh* 6–7).[83] Van Buitenen takes both usages as "tower" (1975, 69, 70), which is certainly a guess. Biardeau (2002, 1: 351) also calls attention to a verse (*Mbh* 2.208*) that has the trio break three drums (*bherī*) and the wall of a *caitya* (*caityaprakāram*) on the peak, but this verse is found only in four manuscripts, including the Vulgate (which Biardeau favors), and is clearly an interpolation. The three drums made by Jarāsaṃdha's father are mentioned just before the insertion (2.19.15–16), but without the interpolated verse that follows; there is nothing to say they were destroyed, and nothing about a Caitya wall, which is clearly a belated explanation built on the mountain's name.[84] On the contrary, Kṛṣṇa establishes the first meaning of *śṛṅga* for the whole passage when he describes Girivraja's five mountains as all having "great horns and cool trees" (*mahāśṛṅgāḥ parvatāḥ śitaladrumāḥ*; 19.3).

Aśvaghoṣa could also have a second pretext for using the word *śṛṅga* to describe the tranquilly seated prince: the word's symbolic significance is brought out in a *Harivaṃśa* passage that asks a question about the same Jarāsaṃdha cycle:

> To what end did the slayer of Madhu (Kṛṣṇa) abandon Mathurā, that (zebu)'s hump of the Middle Country, the sole abode of Lakṣmī, easily perceived as the horn of the earth (*śṛṅga pṛthivyāḥ*), rich in money and grain, abounding in water, rich in Āryas, the choicest of residences?[85]

82. Note that the *Suttanipāta* uses different images when the king's messengers report back and say, "Great king, the *bhikkhu* sits in a mountain cave on the front side of Mount Pāṇḍava, like a tiger or a bull or a lion" (Nakamura 2000, 122)—a scene that could also evoke *girivraja* as the "mountain corral" in which Jarāsaṃdha imprisons the eighty-six kings. See nn. 69, 70 above on the name Girivraja and the possibility that the *Suttanipāta* could precede the epic text.

83. At *Mbh* 2.19.18, this *śṛṅga* is described as garlanded, and at 19.41 Jarāsaṃdha mentions it again when he asks how the trio broke it (*caityakaṃ ca gireḥ śṛṅgaṃ bhittvā kim*; 19.41).

84. Kosambi must pick up on some such tradition when he writes, "But the senseless desecration of the holy antique *caitya* at Rajgir (presumably the Pāsāṇaka Cetiya where the Buddha rested so often) by Bhīma and Kṛṣṇa seems wanton sacrilege (*Mbh* 2.19.19), unsupported by any other record" (1964, 36–37; 1975, 126), on which Brockington comments, "Why he should see the reference to the monument as being a Buddhist *caitya* is equally unclear" (2002, 79–80).

85. *HV* 1.57.2–3: *kim arthaṃ ca parityajya mathurāṃ madhusūdanaḥ/ madhyadeśasya kakudaṃ dhāma lakṣmyāś ca kevalam//śṛṅga pṛthivyāḥ svālakṣyaṃ prabhūtadhānadhanyavat/ āryāḍhyajalabhūyiṣṭam adhiṣṭhānavarottamam.*

This "horn of the earth," along side the zebu's hump as the sole abode of Lakṣmī, evokes associations of Kṛṣṇa with the horn in contested situations where he uses his Śārṅga bow in battles, and, even more particularly, associations with Viṣṇu's Fish and Boar *avatāras* where he uses the "single horn" or "single tusk" (in either case, *ekaśṛṅga*) to rescue Manu's ark and the earth.[86] In other words, in the Jarāsaṃdha cycle, the horn is a symbol of unique sovereignty in contested circumstances, which makes it fitting that Kṛṣṇa and the two Pāṇḍavas break the horn of Magadha's Caityaka Mountain—no matter how difficult it is to imagine—with their bare arms.[87] For they are intent, in the *Mahābhārata*'s terms, upon eliminating Jarāsaṃdha's rivalry of Yudhiṣṭhira for the title of universal sovereign (*saṃrāj*), and, in the *Harivaṃśa*'s terms, upon restoring the unique centrality of Mathurā to the Middle Country (*madhyadeśa*), even in Kṛṣṇa's absence from it.

At one level, what is being contested in the *Buddhacarita* is thus, of course, royal sovereignty, Lakṣmī, who favors the prince even though he declines royal sovereignty when Bimbisāra offers it. But as Aśvaghoṣa registers in further similes, in fact by doubling one simile, what is really contested is the *dharma*: the prince seems to onlookers "like Dharma incarnate" or "like dharma in physical form" (item *BC* 3), and to Bimbisāra he looks "like some being magically projected by Dharma" or "like the image of dharma" (item *BC* 9).[88] This is the force of the way Aśvaghoṣa unfolds this matter as one that has to do not with a debate about the Śaiva–Vaiṣṇava overtones of Kṣatriya *dharma*, such as occurs between Jarāsaṃdha and Kṛṣṇa in the *Mahābhārata* (items *Mbh* 10, 14), but one that has to do quite explicitly with oppositions between Brahmanical royal *dharma* and Buddhist *dharma*—the latter as it is, so to speak, taking shape in the Bodhisattva-prince's mind and the minds of those who see him. But the force of the *Mahābhārata* story, given the no doubt intended ambiguity of the term *caitya*, which can have both Brahmanical and Buddhist meanings,[89] and given as well the results of over a century of scholarship that has sensed this ambiguity,[90] is that it can be taken not only as a story reflecting Śaiva–Vaiṣṇava opposition but Brahmanical–Buddhist opposition as well.

See Hiltebeitel 1989 on this verse and the answer to the question raised in it, which I now bring to bear on the discussion here.

86. See Hiltebeitel 1989, 96, citing Defourny 1976, 17–23.

87. That is indeed how Ganguli translates the passage ([1884–96] 1970, vol. 2, *Sabha Parva*, 52).

88. Cf. *Saundarananda* 2.56cd: the Buddha at birth "shone with the majesty of holy calm like the Law of Righteousness in bodily form (*babhrāje śāntayā lakṣmyā dharmo vigrahavān iva*)."

89. Biardeau richly develops this point; see now 2002, 1: 322 n. 2; 344 (with *Gṛhya Sūtra* references); 330–31; 350.

90. See Brockington 2002, 79 and Hiltebeitel 2005*b*, tracing this impulse to (the younger) Adolf Holtzmann 1892–95, and above, n. 84, on Kosambi.

That brings us to a third pretext for Aśvaghoṣa's surprising "horn" simile. For when one takes the force of the "horn" and "Dharma/*dharma*" similes in conjunction with the fact that it is Bimbisāra, not the prince, who is made "equal to a Pāṇḍava in heroism" and who sees the Bodhisattva as if he had become the horn of the mountain, one could take it that Bimbisāra sees not only Dharma incarnate or *dharma* in physical form but a cross-legged Bodhisattva appearing as the restored horn of the mountain that the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa broke down.

As I attempted to show in *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics*, north Indian *Ālhā* traditions, both in this Hindi oral epic and in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*'s retelling of *Ālhā* in Sanskrit, draw on Ismaili traditions to transpose the *Jarāsaṃdhavadha* into a Rājpūt rivalry that was also read in terms of opposition over empire, in this case between Hindu and Muslim rule.[91] The *Mahābhārata* episode has been open to such readings because it has to do with religious overtones of rivalry over empire, which itself is one of the reasons it cannot be persuasive, no matter how many stylistic or "late devotional" criteria one enlists, to argue that the *Jarāsaṃdhavadha* is extraneous to the *Mahābhārata*.[92] This is the real hinge upon which Aśvaghoṣa opens his close reading of this episode. For although it may look like a weak point to align the Bodhisattva with Kṛṣṇa on the matter of the Bodhisattva's double appearance as Dharma incarnate or *dharma* in physical form, we are at the deepest level at which Aśvaghoṣa engages this *Mahābhārata* scene: the level of Brahmanical versus Hindu *bhakti*, which we have seen underscored by Biardeau. The position of Kṛṣṇa in representing Brahmanical *dharma* in the Jarāsaṃdha episode is decisive. For the first thing to strike one is that the *Mahābhārata*'s actual "Dharma incarnate" and embodied exemplar of *dharma*, Dharmarāja Dharmaputra Yudhiṣṭhira, is precisely not among the trio assaulting Magadha,

91. Hiltebeitel 1999*a*, 150–64 and 344–51 on Ismaili *ginān*s about the Buddha and "Kalinga" (an allomorph of Jarāsaṃdha), though the stories do not relate the two directly. Cf. Khan 2005: although the *ginān*s do not mention the Buddha's preenlightenment entry into Magadha, they bring him in to address Yudhiṣṭhira's postwar consternation (= *Mbh* Book 12, etc.); and when he comes before the Pāṇḍavas he "has a very strange appearance: apart from posing as a religious mendicant, he looks like a warrior, donning Muslim dress. . . . Besides he is a *caṇḍāla* . . . and a leper, from whose body emanates an unbearable odour" (2005, 328; cf. 330, 333, 340). After he challenges Bhīma at the Pāṇḍavas' gate, his Satpanth Ismaili teachings are rich in overtones of *bhakti* and are presented as *dharma* (329, 333). Undercutting the Brahmins who are performing a "huge sacrifice" on Yudhiṣṭhira's behalf, he says "their sacrifice is useless" (as does the half-golden mongoose at the end of *Mbh* Book 14); yet before he retires to the Himalayas he convinces the Pāṇḍavas to sacrifice a cow (none other than the Kāmadhenu or "Cow of Wishes") for a final shared meal that will make possible their liberation (128–31). As Khan says, the *ginān*s may draw not only on Hindu sources but Buddhist ones (326, 337–41)—one wonders, with what ironies.

92. See Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 8, noting that "this sequence provides in a flurry most of the *Mahābhārata*'s usages of the terms *saṃrāj*, 'emperor,' and *sāṃrājya*, 'empire,'" and mentioning some of the scholars who continue to hold the view that it is late and extraneous, which has now been restated by Brockington 2002.

among whom, as Bhīma says first and Kṛṣṇa then confirms, Kṛṣṇa represents prudent policy (*naya, nīti*), Bhīma strength, and Arjuna victory (item *Mbh* 3; *Mbh* 2.14.9; 18.3). Yet what Yudhiṣṭhira says before the trio departs is pertinent to this train of associations. Fearing Jarāsaṃdha's might and ready to change his mind about performing a Rājasūya, Yudhiṣṭhira says, "Bhīma and Arjuna are my two eyes, Janārdana I deem my mind (*manas*); what kind of life shall be left for me without mind or eyes (*manaś cakṣur vihīnasya*)?" (*Mbh* 2.15.2).[93] Kṛṣṇa supplies "policy" (*naya, nīti*) that will turn out to be tricky *dharma*, or more precisely *upāyadharma* (item *Mbh* 14)—a "*dharma* of strategy" or "means," such as Kṛṣṇa often deploys.[94] But it will be done fully in accord with the mind of King Dharma. Indeed, the two verses that identify Kṛṣṇa with policy and Arjuna with victory resonate with the famous tag line that first occurs right after the *Bhagavad Gītā* when Droṇa tells Yudhiṣṭhira, as if he needed to know it, "Where *dharma* is there is Kṛṣṇa; where Kṛṣṇa is there is victory."[95] In short, Aśvaghoṣa's reading of the Jarāsaṃdha episode could be summed up as follows: where Kṛṣṇa was, there now is the *dharma* looking personally like the horn of a mountain.

F.2. Buddhist Mokṣadharma

It may be no mere coincidence that Aśvaghoṣa focuses on pivotal matters bearing on Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in the second books of each epic, reading each in part through a contrast of Brahmanical and Buddhist modes of *bhakti*. Yet if structuralism and symbolism are not the most reliable indicators of intertextual history,[96] we have another marker of Aśvaghoṣa's reading of the *Mahābhārata*

93. See Biardeau 2002, 1: 328 on this passage.

94. On *nīti* as *upāyadharma* in the *Mahābhārata*, see Bowles 2007, 199–204. See especially 199 and n. 33, citing *Mbh* 12.101.2 and 128.13, both from the *Rājadharma Parvan*, but the latter from an *adhyāya* transitional to the *Āpaddharmaparvan*. Bowles comments: "The idea of a *dharma* of 'strategy,' a 'strategic *dharma*,' or 'an expedient abundant in *dharma*,' is, in many ways, collateral with the idea of a proper form of conduct (*dharma*) for a king in times of distress, since a king must employ some form of strategy or policy to overcome difficulties that might arise for his kingdom. Indeed, in a *nīti* context, *upāyadharma* could almost be considered a synonym for *āpaddharma*." Although he explains it only as *upāya*, Kṛṣṇa is of course *the* master of *upāyadharma* and of "many crooked means" (*jihmair upāyair bahubhir*; see 9.60.29) throughout the *Mahābhārata* war.

95. *Mbh* 6.41.55. As mentioned in chapter 11 § D, the line is repeated at 9.61.30, and has the variant, "Where Kṛṣṇa is, there is *dharma*; where *dharma* is, there is victory" at 6.62.34 and 13.153.39.

96. Aśvaghoṣa provides one more piece of possible evidence of familiarity with the *Jarāsaṃdhavadha*: a curious pair of verses, one about a certain Kakṣīvat (*BC* 1.10), of whom Johnston 2004, 3 n. 10 says "nothing is known"; the other about a certain Manthala Gautama, likewise untraced, who carried corpses to please a courtesan named Jaṅghā (4.17). These verses may recall some equally obscure verses in the Jarāsaṃdha story where a Kākṣīvat is fathered on a Śūdra woman by a Ṛṣi Gautama who dwelt at Magadha because he favored the Magadha *vaṃśa*, and was also sought out by the Aṅgas and Vaṅgas, also northeastern peoples (*Mbh* 2.19.5–7).

that may provide a more reliable gauge, even though it points to the same historical conclusions. This is Aśvaghoṣa's interest in the *Mahābhārata*'s didactic corpus on *mokṣa*.

Here we come to a point that several have noticed: Aśvaghoṣa seems to know the *Mahābhārata*'s *Mokṣadharma Parvan*, or at least material in it.[97] Johnston cites, without ever making it clear if he ever discusses it, a discussion by T. Byōdō (n.d.), which has a title to this effect. I have not been able to locate it, but Muneo Tokunaga (2005*a*) spoke on this subject at a London conference a week before I met him at the Dubrovnik conference where I presented a draft of this chapter, and kindly made his paper available to me when I learned of it. Tokunaga begins with an acknowledgment of a 1930 *book* by Tsusho Byodo, of which Johnston had apparently read an English appendix. Tokunaga summarizes Byodo's work as being interested "mainly in philosophical matters," with Byodo's comparison with the *Mahābhārata* "centered in the *Mokṣadharmaparvan*" (2005*a*, 1). According to Tokunaga,

> Results of his comparison of the texts are summarized under five heads: (1) myths, (2) Sāṃkhya teachers, (3) the topic "a younger one sometimes supersedes an older in achievement,"[98] (4) thought-historical, rhetorical, linguistic correspondence, and (5) the relationship between the *Buddhacarita* and the *Mokṣadharmaparvan* (pp. 543–64). In conclusion, he says that Aśvaghoṣa was influenced by the *Mokṣadharma* in his composition of the *Buddhacarita* (p. 560). (Tokunaga 2005*a*, 1)

For Tokunaga, "this assumption is not impossible," but he moves on to some views of Johnston's: that "it is more natural to suppose that the common matter goes back to a single original,"[99] even though Tokunaga finds Johnston going

97. See Hopkins 1901, 387–88; Larson and Bhattacharya 1987, 7, 14–15, 110–22, 129–40, assuming, I think wrongly, that Sāṃkhya references in the *Mokṣadharma* would be from the first to third- or fourth-centuries CE (113), and thus mostly later than Aśvaghoṣa, even though they date the *Mokṣadharma* itself to 200 BCE–200 CE (14). Backed by arguments in Hiltebeitel 2005*d* and 2006*a*, I will be arguing that even the so-called late portions of the *Mokṣadharma Parvan*, including the *Nārāyaṇīya*, would have probably preceded Aśvaghoṣa.

98. See *BC* 1.41–45 as cited above toward the beginning of § D of this chapter.

99. Johnston 2004, xlvi, noting that "much of Arāḍa's exposition of the Sāṃkhya system has close parallels in the *Mokṣadharma*, the connection in one case extending over several verses of the same passage," and suggesting that "the common matter goes back to . . . possibly a textbook of the Vārṣagaṇya school." As Larson and Bhattacharya 1987, 131 observe, "Varṣagaṇya" at *Mbh* 12.306.57 occurs in a list of "many older teachers of Sāṃkhya and Yoga." Assuming this list would be from "the first centuries of the Common Era" (Ibid.), they do not relate Aśvaghoṣa's portrayal to such a context, but they do note (136, 138), as does Johnston (2004, lvi, 172 n. 33), that at *BC* 12.33 Aśvaghoṣa may be quoting the aphorism *pañcaparvā avidyā*, "there are five kinds of ignorance"—from Vārṣagaṇya, since it is elsewhere attributed to him. They date Vārṣagaṇya to ca. 100–300 CE. The *Mokṣadharma* reference should, I think, support the priority of Vārṣagaṇya, if not necessarily their datings.

too far when he states that "despite the many parallels we cannot establish that Aśvaghoṣa knew any portion of the epic in the form in which we now have it" (Ibid., xlvii; Tokunaga 2005, 1). I am encouraged by Tokunaga on this point, on which John Brockington is both more succinct and more extensive: Aśvaghoṣa "definitely draws on the *Śāntiparvan*" (1998, 483). I agree with both Tokunaga and Brockington. I also find very attractive Tokunaga's demonstration that Cantos 9 and 10 of the *Buddhacarita* involve a reading of (Tokunaga says "are based on") the first "forty-five or so chapters in narrative form of the extant *Śāntiparvan*" (Ibid.). For reasons that will become clear, if he is right, his demonstration reinforces my hypotheses, and I will refer to it as a supportive argument. It would seem likely to be a question not only of elements of the *Mokṣadharma* and the *Buddhacarita* drawing on some common sources but of Aśvaghoṣa having read the *Śāntiparvan* in some state of "extant" totality involving both its beginning and its last four major units.

One trace of the range of Aśvaghoṣa's familiarity with the *Śāntiparvan* could be his reference at *Buddhacarita* 8.77 to the story of a Suvarṇaṣṭhīvin, "Excretor of Gold" (Fitzgerald 2004*a*, 236–37), who figures in an *upākhyāna* told by Kṛṣṇa and Nārada toward the beginning of Book 12.[100] This comes not within the segment of the *Buddhacarita* that Tokunaga discusses, but in the canto just before the two in which he finds parallels in the first part of the *Śāntiparvan*. I have also discussed the first forty or so chapters of the *Śāntiparvan* from another angle (Hiltebeitel 2005*d*, 249–58): that they present Yudhiṣṭhira with arguments from the *Bhagavad Gītā* for him to reject as inadequate in his postwar situation, while at the same time foreshadowing the need for instruction that will prove acceptable to him. That will be the instruction that Yudhiṣṭhira receives from Bhīṣma in the four *subparvans* that proceed from the *Śāntiparvan*'s opening: the *Rāja-*, *Āpad-*, *Mokṣa-*, and *Dāna-dharma Parvans* which, together, comprise nearly all of the *Śānti* and *Anuśāsana Parvans*. As to the *Buddhacarita*, though, Tokunaga is certainly right in turning our main attention to its ninth and tenth cantos.

Canto 9 is King Śuddhodana's "Deputation" of his Purohita and Minister to find his son the prince, and chapter 10 is "Bimbisāra's Visit," which we have just been looking at from another angle. I propose that Canto 9 is a hinge chapter for Aśvaghoṣa that allows him to transition from a *Rāmāyaṇa* reading to a *Mahābhārata* one. This means that the Purohita and the Minister get to double

100. It is Suvarṇa*niṣ*ṭhīvin in Aśvaghoṣa's spelling. I am not persuaded by Johnston's point (2004, 120 n. 77) that Aśvaghoṣa's silence on the son's coming back to life "suggests that the poet knew only a version in which the happy ending had not been added." Aśvaghoṣa is not trying to tell the whole story in one verse but making what he wants of the story in what is contextually a perfectly intelligible allusion.

not only for Rāma's two Brahmin visitors in the forest but for the postwar comforters of Yudhiṣṭhira: the first explicitly, the second only implicitly. Yet this *Mahābhārata* reading would not be limited to Cantos 9 and 10 but carry over from Canto 10 into Canto 11 where it is anchored in the *full* meeting with Bimbisāra as an evocation of the *Jarāsaṃdhavadha*. Following Canto 12, in which, as now noted, several have long seen parallels between Arāḍa Kālāma's proto-Sāṃkhya and certain teachings of the *Mokṣadharma Parvan*, this *Mahābhārata* reading would then be concluded in the encounter with Māra in Canto 13.

To understand how Aśvaghoṣa makes Canto 9 a hinge to these unfoldings, we must note two matters. First, such a Brahmanical deputation of a Purohita and Minister to find the prince in the forest seems to be an invention by Aśvaghoṣa. In fact, it is new to his *Buddhacarita*. In his earlier *Saundarananda*, the events from the prince's great departure to his encounter with Māra take only eight verses (3.2–9) without mentioning either the deputation or the first meeting with King Bimbisāra. Second, we must look back to a line near the end of Canto 8 where the Purohita and the Minister define their mission to King Śuddhodana: "Just let there be a war of many kinds between your son and the various prescriptions of scripture."[101] These two speakers will come to this war armed with with Brahmanical scriptures, which the prince will handle rather easily; but, more than this, it sets the terms for the Bodhisattva's inner struggle[102] that carries through all these cantos to his ultimate contest with Māra.

What I would like to emphasize, however, is that, important as it is that Aśvaghoṣa knows something of the *Mahābhārata*'s *Śāntiparvan* as a whole, including its *Mokṣadharma Parvan*, it is even more interesting that he knows and probably takes from it the term *mokṣadharma*. Our chief question is, "Why would teachings on *mokṣadharma* have interested him?" Let us begin with an observation that although Buddhist and Brahmanical texts do sometimes have differences they want to stress when one uses the term *nirvāṇa* and the other the term *mokṣa*, neither has any internal ban on using the other's term, and both would know them as potentially alternates.[103] Like the Buddha, Yudhiṣṭhira, near the beginning of Book 12, wishes to take up the mendicant life and praises

101. *BC* 8.85cd: *bahuvidham iha yuddham astu tāvat/ tava tanayasya vidheś ca tasya tasya*. For *yuddham*, Johnston has "struggle" (2004, 122) rather than "war." Olivelle 2008, 241 translates "Let a battle be waged on many fronts between your son and the diverse rules of scripture."

102. Note that Fitzgerald speaks of "[t]he inner battle that . . . takes place within Yudhiṣṭhira" (2004*a*, 179), occurring (better beginning) at *Mbh* 12.17, while Arjuna briefly refers to this process as still lying ahead: "Now conquer yourself (*vijitātmā . . . bhava*)" (22.10cd). Yudhiṣṭhira's "inner battle" continues through Books 12 and 13, and indeed beyond.

103. See, for example, *BhG* 5.24–29 as cited in chapter 11 § E (conclusion).

the pursuit of *mokṣa*;[104] but unlike the Buddha, he will not do so. Instead, he agrees to listen to Bhīṣma, knowing that he will be dissuaded from pursuing it. Thus a point of Olivelle's is worth reconsidering here: that the *Buddhacarita* speaks of *mokṣa* "in the technical meaning given to it by Manu, namely, renunciatory asceticism of a wandering mendicant" (2008, xxi–xxii; see chapter 5 § E). This may also be true of the *Buddhacarita*'s usages of *mokṣadharma*. To explore this possibility, we now have Aśvaghoṣa responding to the treatment of *mokṣa* in two texts, *Manu* and the *Mahābhārata*. For where he uses the term *mokṣadharma*, he would be responding not to *Manu*, which never uses it, but to the *Mahābhārata*. As we shall see, Aśvaghoṣa's response to *Manu* parallels its dharmaśāstric formulation on debt in just two verses (see above n. 17). More complex, his response to the *Mahābhārata* takes in a full narrative parallel between the Bodhisattva-prince and a king who is disposed, like him, toward renunciatory asceticism and "mokṣa," but who, unlike the Bodhisattva, renounces them! Before looking at how Aśvaghoṣa uses the term *mokṣadharma*, we must thus see how it is used in the *Mahābhārata*.

F.2.A. *MOKṢA* IN *MANU* AND *MOKṢADHARMA* IN THE *MAHĀBHĀRATA*. Olivelle's discussion of the parallel with *Manu* on debt at *Buddhacarita* 9.65–66 must thus be our starting point. While making a "case . . . that Aśvaghoṣa knew Manu's work on dharma" (xix), Olivelle acknowledges Johnston's recognition that Aśvaghoṣa also "knew the 'Rāmāyaṇa' and presents the Buddha as the new Rāma" (2008, xxii). But he is silent on Aśvaghoṣa's relation to the *Mahābhārata*.

Olivelle gets to *Buddhacarita* 9.65–66 having begun a discussion of Aśvaghoṣa's treatment of what he calls "the theology of debt," and introduces the two verses by noting that "[t]hese words are put into the mouth of the counselor of the Buddha's father." This counselor or *mantrin* is the "minister" who has accompanied King Śuddhodana's chaplain or Purohita to find prince Siddhārtha in the forest. In Olivelle's translation, the Minister says:

> A man is released from his debts
> to his ancestors through offspring,
> to seers through studying the Vedas,
> and to the gods through sacrifices;

104. The *Śāntiparvan* is actually rather slow in getting to the term *mokṣa*. Yudhiṣṭhira does not mention it when he first envisions taking to the road as a renunciant (*Mbh* 12.9), though he worries about the effects of bad karma brought on by his royal acts, and their possible effects on future existences (30–36). The first reference to *mokṣa* occurs when Yudhiṣṭhira—in what Fitzgerald calls his "inner battle" (see n. 102)—recalls a verse sung by King Janaka of Mithilā, "who was beyond the pairs of opposites, who had gained Absolute Freedom (*mokṣaṃ samanupaśyatā*), and who had Absolute Freedom in full view (*vimuktena*)" (*Mbh* 12.17.17). As Fitzgerald notes (2004*a*, 685), "the current context marks the first serious appearance of the theme of *mokṣa* in *The Book of Peace*." As we shall see, King Janaka is an ambiguous figure in the *Śāntiparvan*'s portrayal of *mokṣa*, and specifically of *mokṣadharma*.

A man is born with these three debts,
whoever is released from these,
for him alone, they say, is release (*yasyāsti mokṣaḥ kila tasya mokṣaḥ*).

Release is open to one, experts say,

who strives following this sequence of rules (*ity evam etena vidhikrameṇa/ mokṣaṃ sayatnasya vadanti taj jñāḥ*);
Those who desire release violating that sequence (*vikrameṇa mumukṣavaḥ*), only get fatigued though they expend much effort. (Olivelle 2008, xx–xxi; 266–67; 457)

As we saw in chapter 5 § A, Olivelle considers *Manu* to have been the first to use this theology of debt "to defend his position that the orders of life (*āśramas*) are to be followed sequentially as an individual grows old and that renunciation is limited to old age" (2008, xxi). Olivelle buttresses this point with the observation that "these two verses of Aśvaghoṣa parallel" two verses in *Manu*'s sixth chapter on the *āśramas*, which read:

> Only after he has paid his three debts, should a man set his mind on release (*mano mokṣe niveśayet*); if he devotes himself to release without paying them (*anapākṛtya mokṣaṃ tu*), he will proceed downward. Only after he has studied the Vedas according to rule, fathered sons in keeping with the Law, and offered sacrifices according to his ability, should a man set his mind on release (*mokṣe niveśayet*). (*Manu* 6.35–36; Olivelle 2005[*a*], 600; 2008, xxi)[105]

One can see that Aśvaghoṣa's two verses are quite close conceptually to *Manu*'s two verses.

Now it is in annotating these two verses in *Manu* that Olivelle makes the observation I have been quoting about the "technical meaning" *Manu* gives to *mokṣa*. In a parenthesis in that note which I mention only now, he urges that readers should "see Olivelle 2005[*a*], 243." Readers who follow up this recommendation are referred there to his 1981 article titled "Contributions to the Semantic History of Saṃnyāsa." Fortunately, the 2005*a* distillation is almost sufficient for our present concerns. It occurs in a note to *Manu* 1.114ab, a line in *Manu*'s table of contents or "synopsis," where, as cited in chapter 5 § E, Olivelle uses asterisks to call attention to *Manu*'s treatment of *mokṣa* and *saṃnyāsa* as "Renunciation* [6.33–85]" and "Retirement* [6.87–96]" respectively (2005*a*, 92, 401). As mentioned

105. As cited in chapter 5 § A. Cf. Olivelle 2005*a*, 150, translating the three usages of *mokṣa* in this passage by "renunciation" instead of "release," and with reference to his note to Manu 1.114, on which see the text.

in chapter 5, the asterisks direct us to the footnote in question, which I quoted in part, leaving an ellipsis that is now pertinent. After stating that *Manu* attaches its particular "technical meaning" to *mokṣa* making it "a synonym of renunciation and the fourth order of life dedicated exclusively to the search after personal liberation," Olivelle continues with what I elided: "The term has the same meaning when used in the common compound *mokṣadharma*, which is a section of the *Mahābhārata* and a distinct topic in medieval legal digests (*nibandha*)" (2005*a*, 243). Further, after stating that *Manu* distinguishes clearly "between this renunciatory asceticism and the life of a vedic retiree," which *Manu* "designates as saṃnyāsa," Olivelle goes on to say that other translators "ignore the technical use of the two terms here," and references his aforementioned 1981 article for "a more detailed study." Two things were noted from that article in chapter 5. First, Olivelle underscores that the differentiation of *mokṣa* as "renunciation" from *saṃnyāsa* as "retirement" at *Manu* 1.114 involves for the latter the abandonment of ritual activity incumbent on a householder (1981, 270–71; citing *M* 6.86–96). Second, Olivelle shows that, in contrast to *Manu*'s carving out of its technical "vedic retiree" usage to insist on doing the four *āśramas* in sequence, the *Mahābhārata* is one of just a few texts to introduce what Olivelle calls "the classical meaning" of *saṃnyāsa*. That is, the *Mahābhārata* treats *saṃnyāsa*, often with some disfavor, as what comes to be thought of as its ordinary meaning, different from *Manu*'s, in which it is "commonly used as a synonym of such terms as *parivrājaka*, *pravrajita*, *śramaṇa*, *bhikṣu*, and *yati*" (265). Moreover, Olivelle shows that while the *Bhagavad Gītā* offers a "diatribe against renunciation" (268), it also introduces the positive twist that what is renounced with real *saṃnyāsa* is not just karma (ritual or otherwise) but the attachment (*saṅga*) to karma and its fruits (*karmaphala*) (269–70, 272). This, of course, bears on the distinction between *Manu* and the *Gītā*'s different understandings of *karmayoga* (see chapter 11 § C).

We thus find Olivelle relating *Manu*'s technical usage of *mokṣa* directly to the *Mahābhārata*'s usage of *mokṣadharma* in the *Mokṣadharma Parvan*. As Olivelle's comment seems to reflect, the term *mokṣadharma* is not found in either the *Rāmāyaṇa* or *Manu*. Aśvaghoṣa would relate his usages of *mokṣadharma* solely to the *Mahābhārata*, and particularly so in the section of the *Buddhacarita* that Olivelle cites on the "theology of debt." For as we shall see in the next section, it is not long before King Śuddhodhana's Minister tries the argument that seeking *mokṣa* without fulfilling one's three debts is likely to be a failure (9.65–66), that his companion, the Purohita, is the first to speak of *mokṣadharma* in terms that the Buddha-to-be will reject: that kings can win or obtain *mokṣadharma* while remaining householders in the lap of luxury (9.17–19). It is not hard to see how Aśvaghoṣa would represent two Brahmin

counselors as arguing that *mokṣa* must be deferred by an indebted royal householder. Yudhiṣṭhira's brother Bhīma makes a similar link in a sarcastic response to Yudhiṣṭhira's desire for *saṃnyāsa* near the beginning of the *Śāntiparvan*:

> Renunciation should be made at a time of great distress (*āpat kāle hi saṃnyāsaḥ kartavya*), by one who is overcome by old age, or by one who has been cheated by his enemies; so it is decreed. . . . If one resorts to this baldness, this sham-Law (*mauṇḍyam . . . dharmacchadmasamsthāya*), and supports only himself, it is possible for him to subsist, but not to live. But then again, a person can live, and live comfortably, by himself in the forests, by not supporting any sons or grandsons, Gods, seers, guests, or ancestors (*abibhratā putrapautrāndevarṣīnatithīnpitṝn*). The small animals of the wild do not win heaven in this fashion, nor do the wild boars, nor do the birds; and people do not say it is a holy deed for them. King, if anyone could attain perfection from mere renunciation (*saṃnyāsataḥ*), then the mountains and trees would quickly obtain perfection. (*Mbh* 12.10.17, 21–24; Fitzgerald trans. 2004*a*, 187–88)

Along with linking renunciation with old age, as King Bimbisāra will do at *Buddhacarita* 10.33–37 (see the chart in § E above, item *BC* 10), Bhīma debunks the renunciant ideal as a kind of wishful thinking if it implies being free of the three debts to gods, seers and ancestors, which are included among the obligations he mentions. And this comes before Yudhiṣṭhira speaks about *mokṣa* (see n. 103 above) in addition to his wish to undertake *saṃnyāsa*.

Let me then propose, tentatively at this point, since it is before looking at the *Buddhacarita*'s own usages of *mokṣadharma*, that Aśvaghoṣa, in his "critical reading" of both epics, first uses the term to talk about *nirvāṇa*, but in a way that is meant to address Brahmanical usage of the term *mokṣadharma* in the *Mahābhārata* as coming up short, from a Buddhist perspective, on the very question at hand: the idea that *mokṣa* (i.e., *nirvāṇa*) would be formulated in relation to the ambiguities of the renunciatory asceticism of a wandering mendicant, the ideals that engage Yudhiṣṭhira at the beginning of the *Śāntiparvan* until he gives them up, once Bhīṣma has turned his attention from *mokṣadharma* to *dānadharma*, by the *Śāntiparvan*'s end. In these circumstances, it would be significant to know more about how the term *mokṣadharma* is in fact used in the *Mokṣadharma Parvan* and elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata*.

Although there are a few usages of *mokṣadharma* outside the *Mokṣadharma Parvan*, I think that Aśvaghoṣa would be referring mainly to the *Mokṣadharma Parvan*, where the weight and dramatic centrality of the *Mahābhārata*'s teachings on the topic certainly apply. This, as we have seen, is also the view of Byodo [1930] 1969 and Tokunaga (2005). But I would propose additionally,

although it cannot be proven because Aśvaghoṣa makes no reference to any specific *Mokṣadharma Parvan* units, that it would be rather unsuccessful to argue that the *Mokṣadharma Parvan*'s last four units would not have been included in the *Mahābhārata* that Aśvaghoṣa was critiquing, because they are precisely the units where his argument most directly applies. These four are: (*a*) "The Dialogue between King Janaka and the Woman Renouncer Sulabhā" (12.308);[106] (*b*) the story of Śuka (12.309–20);[107] (*c*) the *Nārāyaṇīya* (12.321–39); and (*d*) "The Substory about the Gleaner" (12.340–53). A few words are thus called for on these four closing units.

First, the Sulabhā story is important mainly for setting up King Janaka to Sulabhā's exposé that his much vaunted reputation for living in a state of *mokṣa* while enjoying all the trappings of royalty is not to be believed. Her verdict, which the text endorses (Fitzgerald 2002, 651 n. 10), is,

> You have fallen away from the householder pattern of life without having reached *mokṣa* that is so hard to understand; you exist between these two, babbling about *mokṣa*. (12.308.175; Fitzgerald trans. 2002, 667, modified)

As noted in chapter 10 § C, when Sulabhā enters yogically into Janaka's being to test this claim, he accuses her of a series of violatory "mixings" of *varṇa*, *āśrama*, *gotra*, and *dharma* (*Mbh* 12.308.59–62). Their dialogue includes three usages of *mokṣadharma*, all implying rules of some kind. Both Janaka and Sulabhā speak of the *mokṣadharmas* they follow, apparently as "rules" of their yogic disciplines. First, Janaka speaks of the "the threefold *mokṣadharma*" (*trividhe mokṣadharme*; 25c) or "threefold *mokṣa*" (*trividhaṃ mokṣam*; 27c), explaining, as to the former:

> On knowledge of Sāṃkhya, on yoga, and on the rule of protecting the earth, on this threefold *mokṣadharma* I set out, my doubt severed.[108]

Fitzgerald translates *mokṣadharma* here as "Rule for Absolute Freedom,"[109] but it is hard to make much of this fractioned *mokṣadharma/mokṣa* unless its being fractioned is one of its implied flaws. The second usage comes when Janaka

106. As Fitzgerald 2002, 641 titles it in translating *Sulabhājanakasaṃvāda*.

107. This shorthand applies to the *Śukānuśāsanam* ("Instruction of Śuka"; 12.309), *Śukotpatti* ("Origin of Śuka; 310–15), and what is most generally referred to as the *Śukābhipatanam* ("The Flying about of Śuka"; 316–20).

108. *Mbh* 12.308.25: *sāṃkhyajñāne tathā yoge mahīpālavidhau tathā/ trividhe mokṣadharme 'smin gatādhvā chinnasaṃśayaḥ*. Note that "the rule for protecting the earth" could just be "the rule of a king."

109. Fitzgerald 2002, 656 translates: "With my doubts completely dispelled, I set out on the threefold Rule for Absolute Freedom: The Sāṃkhya Knowledge of Discrimination, the Discipline of Yoga Meditation, and the Rule for protecting the earth."

questions Sulabhā's propriety in bringing about the various kinds of "mixtures" (*saṃkaras*) he imagines her to be guilty of by entering him. Regarding our term, he focuses on an implied mixing of the *āśramas*:

> You live in the *mokṣadharmas* (*vartase mokṣadharmeṣu*) but I am in the householder *āśrama*. This second mixing, that of the *āśramas*, is a very grievous offense of yours. (12.308.60)

Here *mokṣadharmas* would presumably refer to the fourth life-pattern, and again imply "rules" of discipline. Finally, toward the end of Sulabhā's disproof of Janaka's charges, she says, "Trained in the *mokṣadharmas*, I fare alone according to the vow of a Muni."[110] These rule-implying usages are important, but, as we shall see, idiosyncratic to this unit. Narratively and developmentally, the dialogue's main purpose, coming near the end of the *Śāntiparvan*, may include a final jolting of Yudhiṣṭhira as to the improbable outcome of a king's practicing "rules of *mokṣa*" as a royal householder. But it could also remind him that Arjuna had debunked the same Janaka in less decisive but far more vivid and caustic terms near the beginning of the *Śāntiparvan* in his outrage at Yudhiṣṭhira's first musings about *mokṣa* (see n. 104 above) after disclosing that he wanted to renounce the kingdom and take off as a wandering almsman. There, Arjuna quotes what Janaka's *wife* said to him:

> Having given up brilliant Royal Splendor, you look like a dog! Your mother has no son now, and I, the princess of Kosala, have no husband at all because of you. Eighty Kṣatriya women desiring *dharma* attended you (*dharmakāmās tvāṃ kṣatriyāḥ paryupāsate*), waiting for your commands—pitiable women motivated by their desire for the fruits of their actions. Having deprived them of their fruits, what heavenly worlds will you go to now, king, given that *mokṣa* is quite uncertain for souls that others depend upon (*samśayite mokṣe paratantreṣu dehiṣu*). Your deeds are wicked, and you do not have either the higher world or the lower one since you want to live after abandoning your lawful wives (*dharmyān dārān parityajya*). (12.18.12–15; Fitzgerald trans. 2004*a*, 202, slightly modified)

We can see how well rounded the *Śāntiparvan* is here, and how rich it would have been for Aśvaghoṣa if he were to critique both its beginning and its end. Indeed, Sulabhā also reminds Janaka of his "wife" and other "wives":

110. *Mbh* 12.308.184cd: *vinītā mokṣadharmeṣu carāmyekā munivratam.*

> The king who rules this whole earth under a single parasol dwells in just one city and in this city he stays in just one palace, where he lies upon his bed at night, and when he rests in that bed, half of it belongs to his wife; thus is he joined to the consequences of actions by these attachments. . . . He is never in complete control, even when spending time in play with his wives. (12.308.135–36, 139ab; Fitzgerald trans. 2002, 664)

Sulabhā, Arjuna, and Janaka's wife agree that Janaka's affectations to *mokṣa* are quite improbable.

It is, however, in the *Mokṣadharma Parvan*'s final three units that the term *mokṣadharma* is used in a way that marks off the full closure of the *Śāntiparvan* around Yudhiṣṭhira's turn away from this topic. Indeed, it would be unpromising to argue that the *Nārāyaṇīya* would have been so much later than the two units surrounding it that it could have been interpolated between them, after Aśvaghoṣa, in Gupta times (as is usually assumed). These two units frame the *Nārāyaṇīya* by using that term each only once—in the Śuka story only in its very *last* verse, just *before* the *Nārāyaṇīya*, where Yudhiṣṭhira hears,

> Whoever, devoted to tranquility, would recall this meritorious history that pertains to matters of *mokṣadharma*, he attains the supreme way.[111]

and, in "The Substory about the Gleaner," only in its very *first* verse, where, just *after* the *Nārāyaṇīya*, Yudhiṣṭhira asks,

> Now, grandfather, that you have addressed the auspicious *dharmas* that have to do with *mokṣadharma*, you can tell me, lord, about the best *dharma* for those who pursue the *āśramas*.[112]

The Śuka story and "The Substory about the Gleaner" thus frame what the *Nārāyaṇīya* has to say about *mokṣadharma*. Let us see how.

When Yudhiṣṭhira asks to know more about Śuka, he is asking his grandfather Bhīṣma about the firstborn son of his other grandfather, indeed his real grandfather genetically, Vyāsa. Śuka would be his father Pāṇḍu's eldest brother.[113] The Śuka story is obviously a family matter, and comes at a point where Yudhiṣṭhira is marking a turn toward adjusting to his familial and

111. *Mbh* 12.320.41: *itihāsam imam puṇyam mokṣadharmārthasaṃhitam/ dhārayed yaḥ śamaparaḥ sa gacchet paramāṃ gatim.*

112. *Mbh* 12.340.1: *dharmāḥ pitāmahenoktā mokṣadharmāśritāḥ śubhāḥ/ dharmam āśramināṃ śreṣṭhaṃ vaktum arhati me bhavān.*

113. For fuller discussion, see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 279–80. For Yudhiṣṭhira's opening questions, see *Mbh* 12.310.1–5.

dynastic responsibilities, which involve ruling the Kuru kingdom. Moreover, as Olivelle mentions, along with the *Mahābhārata*'s bringing early prominence to the "classical" *āśrama* system, the Śuka story is its "most straightforward presentation of the original [preclassical *āśrama*] system" (1993, 154). This is because it confirms that Śuka can skip the full sequence of the four *āśramas* and seek release directly as a continuation from the first, that is, from *brahmacarya*, without marrying, and above all, without waiting for the fourth. The Śuka story that Bhīṣma tells is about how Śuka obtained *mokṣa*, having received his father Vyāsa's and also King Janaka's instruction, and also due to a somewhat inherent disposition toward it. Most scholars, and perhaps Yudhiṣṭhira, take Śuka's *mokṣa* to be his exit from the world of *saṃsāra*.[114] I say this *might* be Yudhiṣṭhira's impression, since the Pāṇḍavas are told in Book 3 to visit a *tīrtha* named Vyāsasthalī where Vyāsa was consumed with grief over his son, presumably Śuka, and was resolved to give up the body until he was "made to get up again by the gods."[115] But whether Yudhiṣṭhira knows it or not, *we* know that Śuka has not left the world of *saṃsāra*, since three generations after Yudhiṣṭhira, he joins his father Vyāsa as an attendee at Janamejaya's snake sacrifice to hear the *Mahābhārata* told for the first time in the human world by Vaiśaṃpāyana.[116] Indeed Śuka and Vyāsa are among the attendees who decide the fate of the snakes. Yudhiṣṭhira might also pick up a hint of how Śuka might be living on after obtaining *mokṣa* from what Bhīṣma tells him just before he begins with the Śuka story proper:

> Approach life's journey by [eating] the remains of gods and guests (*devatātithiśeṣeṇa yātrām prāṇasya saṃśraya*; 12.309.5cd).

The bird-like Śuka (his name means "Parrot") is encouraged to do something like gleaning (*uñchavṛtti*), which could tie in with the titular subject of the *Mokṣadharma*'s third and last unit. In any case, Śuka's manner would fit what Olivelle calls the "technical meaning" that *Manu* gives to *mokṣa*, "namely, renunciatory asceticism of a wandering mendicant, . . . rather than simply liberation from the cycle of rebirth." Moreover, as we have noted, the last verse of his story mentions the term *mokṣadharma* to open up that subject for its most sustained treatment in the *Nārāyaṇīya*.

As to the third and final unit of the *Mokṣadharma Parvan*, "The Subtale about the Gleaner" tells of a Brahmin named Dharmāraṇya who hears that the

114. See, typically, Sörensen [1904] 1963, 216: "Ç. Obtained liberation, Vyāsa lamented his death." Cf. Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 282–84, 317.

115. *Mbh* 3.81.81–82, which concludes: *kṛto devaiś ca rājendra punar utthāpitas tadā*; cf. Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 43, 282.

116. *Mbh* 1.48.7ab; see Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 115 and n. 71.

"highest wonder" a snake-king named Padmanābha saw while pulling the Sun's chariot was a refulgent being attaining liberation by entering the "solar disc" in a moment. That could remind Yudhiṣṭhira of Śuka, and who knows, maybe it was him. As Belvalkar puts it in describing this story's opening *adhyāya* 340:

> Yudhiṣṭhira says to Bhīṣma that, though he has listened to his discourses on the Mokṣa-dharma, he still desires to hear from him the highest Dharma which is to be practised by persons performing the duties of the four *āśramas*. Thereupon Bhīṣma tells him there are many ways of practising the highest Dharma. (Belvalkar 1954–66, ccxxxi)

Clearly, Bhīṣma is transitioning Yudhiṣṭhira away from *mokṣadharma*, about which he has more or less heard enough, to the topic of the *āśramas*, which implies his remaining in the householder stage as a royal householder—the very thing that king Śuddhodana's minister holds up for the Bodhisattva to consider doing himself. And indeed, "The Subtale of the Gleaner" will tell about a householder reaching the highest goal, albeit not as a king but a gleaner, and without further mentioning *mokṣa*. A fuller discussion of this point would want to take in further complexities of the Śuka and Gleaner stories,[117] but for present purposes it will suffice to say that Yudhiṣṭhira has turned his corner precisely by hearing the unit between them, the *Nārāyaṇīya*. For our discussion of the *Buddhacarita* and also for our wider treatment of the *Nārāyaṇīya* in this book, it is the *Nārāyaṇīya* that has the most importance.

The *Nārāyaṇīya* is too complex a text, and contains too many plots and subplots, to be usefully summarized. Suffice it to say that can be useful to divide it into a Part A, which tells how the Ṛṣi Nārada journeyed to and back from Śvetadvīpa ("White Island"), where he got a special vision (*darśana*) of Nārāyaṇa; and a Part B, which includes three dips to the *Mahābhārata*'s outer frame where Śaunaka gets to ask questions to the bard Sauti or Ugraśravas. To appreciate the significance of these dips and the questions that emerge through them, one must recognize that S. K. Belvalkar (1954–66), basing his decision on obvious changes that were introduced into what have become manuscripts in the Malayālam script, erred in editing the Pune Critical Edition's *Śāntiparvan* when he reverted the conversation between Śaunaka and Ugraśravas to an inner frame one between Janamajeya and Vaiśaṃpāyana.[118] Yudhiṣṭhira's turning

117. Hiltebeitel forthcoming-*b* attempts this. There are plans to bring out a conference volume from the Brown University conference at which it was presented.

118. See Hiltebeitel 2006*a*: I agree with Oberlies 1997 and Grünendahl 1997's assessments of Belvalkar's error in editing, but not with their interpretations of Part B as later than Part A, or with Grünendahl's view that Belvalker's mistake is ultimately insignificant in matters of interpretation.

point occurs toward the end of Part A, and is clearly a moment of family bonding. Having heard the White Island story, he and his brothers become devoted to Nārāyaṇa, with Kṛṣṇa also listening in and standing by.[119] The next *adhyāya* (12.327), which begins Part B, is then the *Nārāyaṇīya*'s showcase for the term *mokṣadharma,* being the only *adhyāya* in the *Nārāyaṇīya* to mention the term, which it does three times. The term *mokṣadharma* does not occur again until Yudhiṣṭhira credits Bhīṣma with teaching him about it in the first verse of "The Subtale about the Gleaner," as noted. And thereafter, Bhīṣma only mentions *mokṣadharma* one more time in a stray line[120] more than halfway through the *Dānadharma Parvan*. Yet it would be a mistake to think that the *Nārāyaṇīya* leaves the concept behind after *adhyāya* 327, because it is introduced there in conjunction with the somewhat overlapping term *nivṛtti-dharma,* which can be said to thread the purport of *mokṣadharma* into further reaches of the *Nārāyaṇīya*. *Nivṛtti,* either in the compound *nivṛttidharma,* or with that meaning, has five usages along with the three of *mokṣadharma* in *adhyāya* 327. More than this, in Part B, in the *Nārāyaṇīya*'s second dip to the outer frame (see Hiltebeitel 2006*a*, 239–43), the verb *ni-vṛt* is used twice to describe Nārada's running "return" (12.331.16a, 20c) from seeing Nārāyaṇa on White Island to see Nara and Nārāyaṇa at their Badarī *āśrama* (basically, to see what the two Nārāyaṇas and Nara all have in common). This is one of the anomalies that so intrigues Śaunaka that he asks his second leading question to Sauti about it. Clearly, as we could also show with Śuka, it has to do with *returning* (*ni-vṛt*) "here" to this world.[121]

Now, once we correct Belvalkar's attempt to restore the inner frame dialogue between Janamejaya and Vaiśaṃpāyana to the outer frame one between Śaunaka and Ugraśravas, we find that *adhyāya* 12.327, at the beginning of Part B, introduces the topic of *mokṣadharma* while making the *Nārāyaṇīya*'s *first* dip to the outer frame. Basically, Śaunaka asks Sauti the first question that has come to mind from hearing the White Island story, and Sauti answers by telling him what Vaiśaṃpāyana said when asked "the same" question by Janamejaya, which was to tell him what Vyāsa once told his five disciples,

119. *Mbh* 12.326.121: "Having heard this best of Narratives, O Janamejaya, King Dharma and all his brothers became devoted to Nārāyaṇa." See chapter 12 §§ C and E on this and similar scenes at 3.187.50–53 and 13.126.4–6.

120. It occurs in a unit called *Śrāddha-Kalpa*, "Procedures for Ancestral Rites" (13.87–92), in an *adhyāya* where Bhīṣma distinguishes Brahmins who are unsuitable to hire for *śrāddhas* from those who are suitable, mentioning among the latter "Yatis conversant with *mokṣadharma*" (*yatayo mokṣadharmajñā*; 3.90.25c).

121. See the repeated uses of *iha*, "here," in this second dip to describe Nārada's arrival at Badarī (331.21d; 38d; 51e). On the Śuka story, cf. Hiltebeitel 2001*a*, 286–94, especially with reference to 12.314.33–36, where Vyāsa's disciples, including Śuka, ask his favor that the Vedas should "abide here," probably including the *Mahābhārata* as "this (*ayam*) Veda."

including Vaiśaṃpāyana and Śuka (see Hiltebeitel 2006*a*, 233–39). For present purposes, it must suffice to give the contextual flavor of the three usages of *mokṣadharma*.

Śaunaka opens things up in Part B by asking about Nārāyaṇa: how, while he is "established in *nivṛtti dharma*, enjoying peace, ever the beloved of Bhagavatas," do the other gods come to accept shares according to *pravṛtti dharmas*, while *nivṛtti dharmas* are "made for those who have turned aside" (327.2–3). The first use of *mokṣadharma* now addresses this tension. Sauti recalls the purportedly similar question that Janamejaya asked Vaiśaṃpāyana, from which I cull only the verses with which he begins:

> [Janamejaya said,] These worlds with Brahmā, men, gods and demons are seen everywhere to be attached to rites said to assure prosperity. And *mokṣa* is said by you, O Brahmin, to be *nirvāṇa*, the supreme happiness. And those who are released are beyond merit and sin; we hear they enter the god of a thousand rays. Alas, the eternal *mokṣadharma* is surely difficult to observe (*aho hi duranuṣṭeyo mokṣadharmaḥ sanātanaḥ*), abandoning which all the gods have become enjoyers of rites to gods and ancestors (*havya-kavya*). (12.327.5–7)

Imagine Aśvaghoṣa, if he read this, raising his eyebrows at the comparison between *mokṣa* and *nirvāṇa*—with both as something that all the gods "abandon" despite its being "eternal"![122] So far one might suspect that in being placed beside *mokṣa* as compared with *nirvāṇa*, "the eternal *mokṣadharma*" would have to do more here with liberation from *saṃsāra* than with renunciatory asceticism. But with it being the gods who are in question, we can already see that they do not need either. The next usage comes where Vaiśaṃpāyana is quoting what Vyāsa told him and his other four disciples, including Śuka, about what Brahmā and the gods and Ṛṣis once learned when they went to ask Nārāyaṇa about such matters on the northern shore of the Milky Ocean, where they found him. There, Nārāyaṇa remarked that, while he has consigned the gods to receive offerings until the end of the *kalpa* according to *pravṛtti dharma* for the welfare of the world, and has assigned seven mindborn Ṛṣis—Marīci, Aṅgiras, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasiṣṭha—to procreation following *pravṛtti-dharma* (326.60–62), he has also assigned seven other Ṛṣis—Sana, Sanatsujāta, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumāra, Kapila, and Sanātana, "called mental sons of Brahmā" (64–65)—to do the following:

122. Cf. *Mbh* 12.326.63ab: "The highest *nivṛtti* is known as the extinction all *dharmas*" (*nirvāṇaṃ sarva dharmāṇāṃ nivṛttiḥ paramā smṛtā*).

> With knowledge that comes of itself, they are established in *nivṛtti dharma*. They are the foremost of yoga-knowers, as also knowers of the Sāṃkhya-*dharma*. They are preceptors in *mokṣaśāstra* and promulgators of *mokṣadharma* (*mokṣadharmapravartakāḥ*).[123]

Clearly, we know this group, some of them from the *Mahābhārata* itself, as perennial Ṛṣis of the type whose *mokṣa* entails their returning occasionally to this world to tell us about it. Indeed, we have met an unaging Brahmā Sanatkumāra in the *Ambaṭṭha* and *Aggañña Suttas* (see chapter 4 § A). Finally, the third usage comes when Vyāsa tells what happened when all the other heaven-dwellers but Brahmā had gone. When Brahmā remained in place, "desiring to see the blessed lord who takes on the body of Aniruddha, the god, having assumed the great Horse's Head (Hayaśiras), appeared to him, reciting the Vedas with their limbs. . . ." (327.80–81). The Horse's Head now reinforces the distinctions between *nivṛtti* and *pravṛtti* with special attention to Brahmā's charge to oversee *pravṛtti* as the "world's creator" (*lokakartā*), and promises, before vanishing, that he (the Horse's Head is of course Nārāyaṇa) will intervene with various manifestations (*prādurbhāvas*) to bear the work of the gods (*surakāryam*) whenever things get intolerable (82–86b). Vyāsa then continues:

> So it is that this one of great share, the eternal lotus-naveled one[124] . . ., the eternal upholder of sacrifices, has fixed *nivṛtti dharma*, which is the destination of those whose teaching is the imperishable. He has (also) ordained *pravṛtti dharmas*, having made for the world's diversity. He is the beginning, middle, and end of creatures; he is the ordainer and the ordained, he is the maker and the made. At the end of the *yuga* he sleeps after having retracted the worlds; at the beginning of the *yuga* he awakens and creates the universe. (12.327.87–89)

This is all buildup to the *Nārāyaṇīya*'s final usage of *mokṣadharma*, for Vyāsa now starts a laud of Nārāyaṇa (327.90–96) that includes this verse:

> O you who always dwells on the ocean, O Hari, you whose hair is like *muñja* grass,
> O you who are the peace of all beings, you who imparts *mokṣa-dharma* (*mokṣadharmānubhāṣine*). . . . [125]

123. *Mbh* 12.327.65c–66: *svayamāgatavijñānā nivṛttaṃ dharmam āsthitāḥ// ete yogavido mukhyāḥ sāṃkhyadharmavidas tathā/ ācāryā mokṣaśāstre ca mokṣadharmapravartakāḥ*.

124. He refers to Nārāyaṇa as "the eternal Padmanābha" (*padmanābhaḥ sanātanaḥ*)—a name we meet in the next unit, "The Subtale about the Gleaner," as the name of the snake who drives the sun's chariot.

125. *Mbh* 12.327.93: *samudravāsine nityaṃ haraye munjakeśine/ śāntaye sarvabhūtānāṃ mokṣadharmānubhāṣine*.

Vyāsa then concludes his laud with a guarantee to his disciples that all this is true, and exhorts them to sing Hari's praise with Vedic words (327.97–98), whereupon Vaiśaṃpāyana winds up this quotation from his guru by telling Janamejaya that "all of Veda-Vyāsa's disciples and his son Śuka, the foremost knower of *dharma*," did as he said (327.99).

In his second, central, and transitional moment in presenting *mokṣadharma*, Bhīṣma thus flavors it as something well beyond Yudhiṣṭhira's current intent: it is a "knowledge that comes of itself" to those who "are established in *nivṛtti dharma*. They are the foremost of yoga-knowers, as also knowers of the Sāṃkhya-*dharma*. They are preceptors in *mokṣaśāstra* and promulgators of *mokṣadharma*." Indeed, considering what we learned about how Yudhiṣṭhira and other supernaturally incarnated characters in the *Mahābhārata* will come to "the end of their karma" in a way that makes *mokṣa* moot (see chapter 12 § A), we might even say that it is beyond his capacity. In any case, Bhīṣma's overall order of business has been to secure Yudhiṣṭhira's commitment to the *dharma* of kings, that is, to *rājadharma*, the first of the four topics that comprise his curriculum for the war-torn king. When Bhīṣma gets to *mokṣadharma*, it has become an interesting theoretical matter that Yudhiṣṭhira has more or less agreed to put behind him. For Aśvaghoṣa, it is this tension with *rājadharma* that would make Yudhiṣṭhira's shuttling of *mokṣadharma* interesting, and we will find evidence for this in ways that he juxtaposes the two terms.

Curiously, the *Mahābhārata*'s use, and it seems, possible invention, of the term *mokṣadharma* has an anomalous, even uncomfortable feel to it. Wasn't it one of the high points of the *Bhagavad Gītā* that Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna he should abandon all *dharmas* since Kṛṣṇa will "release" him from every sin (18.66)? How can there be "rules" or "laws on salvation or release," or even one rule or law on it, if one is to be released from all laws? In a thought-provoking article on the tensions between *sādhāraṇadharma* and *varṇāśramadharma* as worldly, and *mokṣadharma*, Gerald Larson describes the latter as the *dharma* that "does not fit" (1972, 149). Adam Bowles notes that *nivṛttidharma* overlaps in the *Mahābhārata* with *mokṣadharma*, and remarks that the latter looks at first blush "like an oxymoron."[126] I do not think, however, that it was meant not to fit or to be as oxymoronic as it first looks. But translating the *dharma* in it is certainly less straightforward than it is in the titles for the other three of Bhīṣma's anthologies. This is how James Fitzgerald broached it in his 1980 dissertation:

> So the majority of texts collected in the MDh focus directly on *mokṣadharma-s*, that is, behavioral or attitudinal norms (*dharma-s*)

126. See Bowles 2007, 153, citing Biardeau 1981*a*, 94; Olivelle 1992, 53: "a term that may have been viewed as a contradiction by early Brāhmaṇical theologians, becomes a respected branch of the science of *dharma*."

> leading to *mokṣa*, ultimate personal transcendence of the limits, pain, and misery common to the situation of all living beings. From the doctrinal, or thematic, perspective, the collection is best understood in terms of a general distinction between 1) texts which address directly some *mokṣa* theme and 2) texts which address *mokṣa* related themes more indirectly, by way of working through problems posed in terms of traditional *dharmic* categories. The texts of this latter type confront the practical *dharmic* implications as well as the theoretical arguments of *mokṣa* oriented themes. (Fitzgerald 1980, 231)

I like this statement for its attention to the tension between both *dharma* and *mokṣa* in the term *mokṣadharma*, and for its this-textly and this-worldly orientation, which clearly applies to the *Nārāyaṇīya* and the two units that surround it. Equally clearly, that is not the perspective of Aśvaghoṣa.

F.2.B. *MOKṢADHARMA* IN THE *BUDDHACARITA*. I present Aśvaghoṣa's reading of a full *Śāntiparvan* as a working hypothesis worth considering, well aware that it will be met skeptically by some who continue to hold the *Nārāyaṇīya*, in particular, to be late, and aware too that it requires untestable assumptions about Aśvaghoṣa's reading habits. Coming now to what Aśvaghoṣa actually wrote, there are three usages of *mokṣadharma* in the surviving Sanskrit portions of the first half of the *Buddhacarita*, all in the most *Mahābhārata*-related segment described above. Before turning to them, however, two things are worth noting.

First, reinforcing the possibility that Aśvaghoṣa could be recalling the *Nārāyaṇīya* is the fact that, like that text, he uses *mokṣadharma* in ways that overlap with *nivṛtti-dharma* in contrast with *pravṛtti*. For instance, within our *Mahābhārata* sector, the prince winds up his exchange with King Bimbisāra:

> So, whether one is young, old, or even a child,
> one should quickly act in such a way here
> That, endowed with dharma, with a perfected self,
> one will win the continued life one seeks (*pravṛttir iṣṭā*),
> or the total cessation of such life (*vinivṛttir eva vā*).
> (*BC* 11.63; Olivelle trans. 2008, 320)

And shortly before that segment, he tells the anchorites, "the *dharma* of cessation from activity (*nivṛttidharma*) is apart from the continuance of active being (*pravṛttyā*)" (7.48). The fact that Aśvaghoṣa uses both *mokṣa* and *nivṛtti* (along with *pravṛtti*) in his earlier *Saundarananda*, but not in compounds with "*dharma*," could suggest that he did his close reading of the *Mokṣadharma Parvan* between

writing these two *kāvyas*. For his earlier work, he coins the decisive compound *mokṣamārga* (1.1; cf. 17.13), which does not occur in either epic.

Second, assuming that Johnston was consistent in choosing the phrase "law of salvation" in his attempt to reconstruct the Sanskrit from its Tibetan and Chinese translations, it is worth noting the tenor of two likely additional usages of the term *mokṣadharma* itself after the surviving Sanskrit portions of the *Buddhacarita*. First, resting after his enlightenment and preparing to preach, the Buddha saw that "the law of salvation was exceeding subtle" (*BC* 14.96). And second, just after turning the "Wheel of the Law" with his first sermon and converting his first five disciples, "the Omniscient established the Law of Salvation" with further preaching and more conversions (16.1). "Law of salvation" (that is, probably *mokṣadharma*) would seem to reach its full impact as one of Aśvaghoṣa's terms for the true *dharma* itself as the "Law" and "Teaching" of the newly enlightened Buddha. If Aśvaghoṣa is critiquing the usages of *mokṣadharma* in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, that would be what the gods and Yudhiṣthira abandon.

Turning now to the three verifiable usages, the first two occur in the exchange between the prince and the Purohita. When the Purohita and the Minister arrive, they find the prince sitting below a tree (*BC* 9.8). In being the first to convey the message of the prince's father, the Purohita seems to mix the king's sentiments with some new words of his own. Now acknowledging that the prince's "fixed resolve with regard to *dharma*" will be realized as his "future goal," but invoking once again the father's massive grief that the prince is doing this "at the wrong time" (9.14–16), the Purohita continues to report the words of the prince's father as follows:

> 17. Therefore enjoy lordship for the present over the earth and you shall go to the forest at the time approved by the scriptures (*śāstradṛṣṭe*). Have regard for me, your unlucky father, for dharma consists in compassion for all creatures.
> 18. Nor is it only in the forest that this *dharma* is achieved; its achievement is certain for the self-controlled in a city too. Purpose and effort are the means in this matter; for the forest and the badges of mendicancy are the mark of the faint-hearted.
> 19. The *dharma* of salvation (*mokṣadharma*) has been obtained by kings even though they remained at home, wearing the royal tiara, with strings of pearls hanging over their shoulders and their arms fortified by rings, as they lay cradled in the lap of imperial Fortune (*lakṣmī*).[127]

127. *BC* 9.17. *tad bhuṅkṣva tāvad vasudhādhipatyaṃ/ kāle vanaṃ yāsyasi śāstradṛṣṭe//aniṣṭabandhau kuru mayy apekṣam/ sarveṣu bhūteṣu dayā hi dharmaḥ//*

18. *na caiṣa dharmo vana eva siddhaḥ/ pure 'pi siddhir niyatā yatīnām// buddhiś ca yatnaś ca nimittam atra/ vanaṃ ca liṅgaṃ ca hi bhīrucihnam//*

19. *maulīdharairaṃsaviṣaktahāraiḥ/keyūraviṣṭabdhabhujairnarendraiḥ//lakṣmyaṅkamadhyeparivartamānaiḥ/ prāpto gṛhasthair mokṣadharmaḥ.*

Here is Olivelle's translation of the last of these three verses, which catches how Aśvaghoṣa makes mokṣadharma the verse's very last word:

> Kings, even while remaining householders
> cradled in the lap of royal fortune
> crowns upon their heads,
> pearl strings on shoulders,
> arms bound with bracelets,
> have won the dharma of release.
> (*BC* 9.19; Olivelle 2009, 251)

In being the first to mention *mokṣadharma*, the Purohita prompts the Bodhisattva's doubt that release can be won in the lap of royal luxury, whereupon the Bodhisattva states his firm resolve not to seek it there himself whether it is possible are not. The Purohita goes on, purportedly in the father's words, to mention Bali and Janaka of Videha among several otherwise obscure householder kings[128] who "were well trained in dharma rules leading to highest bliss" (*naiḥśreyase dharmavidhau vinītān*)[129] even while they remained *gṛhasthas* (20–21). In invoking King Janaka here, Aśvaghoṣa could be recalling Arjuna's quotation from Janaka's wife and/or the Sulabhā story, which mentions the term *mokṣadharma* in Sulabhā's exposé of the hypocrisy of Janaka's claims to being liberated. As further evidence of Aśvaghoṣa's *Mahābhārata* frame of reference here, it is at this point that the Purohita recalls Bhīṣma, though not in connection with his postwar oration.[130] In any case, when the prince replies "after a moment's meditation (*dhyātvā muhūrtam*)" (*BC* 9.30), he says that fear of the three signs has left him no choice but to leave, even knowing the fatherly affections involved (31); in a world of wayfarers, why cherish grief?[131] However

128. Johnston cannot trace some of these (2004, 126–27, n. 20).

129. Olivelle's more informative translation (2008, 251) suggests something in which Buddhist readers could hear an ironic reference to monastic training. Johnston (2004, 127) has, "versed in the method of practising the *dharma* that leads to final beatitude."

130. He recalls "the deeds done by Bhīṣma, who sprang from the womb of Gaṅgā, Rāma, and Rāma Jāmadagnya, to please their fathers" (25), and concludes by again recalling the grief caused to others whom the prince has left behind (26–29). Nothing in the *Mahābhārata* suggests that Bhīṣma obtains *mokṣa*. When he sends his concentrated breaths through the crown of his head up to heaven, Kṛṣṇa tells the weeping Gaṅgā, who has emerged from her waters, that he has rejoined the Vasus (*Mbh* 13.154.2–7, 18, 28, 32). See however chapter 12 § A; Austin 2009, 601, 614–15: Bhīṣṃa would be among those whom Nīlakaṇṭha thinks would have obtained *mokṣa* (but then so would Yudhiṣṭhira).

131. *BC* 9.35. These responses may recall the Śuka story near the end of the *Mokṣadharma Parvan*, in which Janaka of Videha is cast, even in his own palace, as an expert on renunciation, and in which Vyāsa confronts his fatherly affections for his ultimately affectless son Śuka as the latter makes his *mokṣa*-departure. See Hiltebeitel 2001, 278–322. On Janaka in other such contexts, see Olivelle 1993, 238–40.

noble it is that his father wishes to hand over the kingdom to him, he rejects kingship as an "abode of delusion in which are to be found fearfulness, the intoxication of pride, weariness and the loss [or oppression, or "squeezing"] of *dharma* by the mishandling of others (*parāpacāreṇa ca dharmapīḍā*)."[132] It may be "praiseworthy for kings to leave their kingdoms and enter the forest in the desire for *dharma* (*dharmābhilāṣeṇa*), but it is not fitting to break one's vow and forsaking the forest to go to one's home"; for a man of resolution who has gone to the forest out of desire for *dharma*, return to the city would be like eating one's own vomit, like reentering a burning house (44–47). And now, coming to the *Buddhacarita*'s second usage of *mokṣadharma*, he says with precise and loaded words on our central point:

> 48. As for the revelation (*śruti*!) that kings obtained final emancipation (*mokṣa*) while remaining as householders (*nṛpā gṛhasthā*),[133] this is not the case. How can the *dharma* of salvation (*mokṣadharma*) in which quietude (*śama*) predominates be reconciled with the *dharma* of kings (*rājadharma*) in which severity of action (*daṇḍa*) predominates?[134]

Going on to argue that "quietude and severity are incompatible (*śamaś ca taikṣṇyaṃ ca hi nopapannam*)" for a king (49), he even subjects the Purohita's affirmative proposition to a dialectical critique:

> 50. Either therefore those lords of the earth resolutely cast aside their kingdoms and obtained quietude, or, stained by kingship, they claimed to have attained liberation on the ground that their senses were under control, but in fact only reached a state that was not final.
> 51. Or let it be conceded they attained quietude while holding kingship, still I have not gone to the forest with an undecided mind; for having cut through the net known as home and kindred I am freed and have no intention of re-entering that net.[135]

132. *BC* 9.39–40. For "squeezing," see Bowles 2004, 199 n. 33, on *dharmam prapīḍya* at *Mbh* 12.101.2. Johnston 2004, 131 n. 40, also notes a usage of *dharmapīḍa* at what is now Critical Edition 13.96.10, which is a verse in which Agastya tells that he has heard, "Time harms (kills, saps) the energy of *dharma* (*kālo hiṃsate dharmavīryam*)," coming in a series of stories about when it is *dharma not* to accept gifts (13.94–96).

133. Johnston 2004, translates, "As for the tradition that kings obtained final emancipation while remaining in their homes. . ."—which I change for the obvious points of emphasis. Cf. Olivelle 2008, 261: "As for the scripture that householder kings have attained release."

134. *BC* 9.48. *yā ca śrutir mokṣam avāptavanto/ nṛpā gṛhasthā iti naitad asti//śamapradhānaḥ kva ca mokṣadharmo/ daṇḍapradhānaḥ kva ca rājadharmaḥ*.

Cf. Olivelle 2008, 261 for the second line: "The dharma of release, where calm prevails, and the dharma of kings, where force prevails—how far apart are these!"

135. *BC* 9.50. *tan niścayād vā vasudhādhipās te/ rājyāni muktvā śamam āptavantaḥ//rājyāṅgitā vā nibhṛtendriyatvād/ anaiṣṭike mokṣakṛtābhimānāḥ//*

51. *teṣāṃ ca rājye 'stu śamo yathāvat/ prāpto vanaṃ nāham aniścayena//chittvā hi pāśaṃ gṛhabandhusaṃjñam/ muktaḥ punar na pravivikṣur asmi*.

What a crystal-clear Buddhist critique of the ambiguities of the Brahmanical position! And, I think implicitly, what a subtle response to the nearly interminable indecisiveness and ultimate resignation to *rājadharma* and *gṛhasthadharma*, while putting aside *mokṣadharma*, of Yudhiṣṭhira Dharmarāja!

The third usage comes early from Māra, fingering an arrow (*BC* 13.8) as he first verbally challenges the Bodhisattva's right to sit beneath the *bodhi* tree:

> 9. Up, up, Sir Kṣatriya, afraid of death. Follow your own *dharma* (*cara svadharmam*), give up the *dharma* of liberation (*tyaja mokṣadharmam*). Subdue the world with both arrows and sacrifices, and from the world obtain the world of Vāsava.[136]

This is the first and only usage of *svadharma* in the first fourteen cantos of the *Buddhacarita*, and, as far as I can see, the only one likely in the entire text. Note that whereas in the first usage of *mokṣadharma* the Purohita says it is possible to combine *mokṣadharma* with *gṛhasthadharma*, and in the second the prince contrasts *mokṣadharma* with *rājadharma*,[137] Māra now contrasts it with *svadharma*.

Indeed, as we now see, up until the likely usages of *mokṣadharma* to refer to the true dharma after the Buddha's enlightenment, Aśvaghoṣa uses it contrastively with a definite *Mahābhārata* cachet. In each case his usages might be intended to prickle Brahmanical ears with references to the postwar predicament of Yudhiṣṭhira, who of course wants to do something like what the Buddha does and is persuaded not to. But this third usage more pointedly echoes the prewar dilemma of Arjuna, which can at least be said to anticipate Yudhiṣṭhira's postwar one.[138] From the first word *uttiṣṭha*, the imperative "Up, up" or "Arise,"

That householders can obtain liberating knowledge could be seen as the Mīmāṃsā position; see Olivelle 1993, 238–40.

136. *BC* 13.9: *uttiṣṭha bhoḥ kṣatriya mṛtyubhīta/ cara svadharmaṃ tyaja mokṣadharmam//bāṇaiś ca yajñaiś ca vinīya lokam/ lokāt padam prāpnuhi vāsavasya*.

Schreiner 1990 brings out that there is a variant *varasva dharmam*, "choose *dharma*," for *cara svadharmam*. Weaker and noncontrastive, I think we can treat it as secondary. Cf. Olivelle 208, 375:"Rise up, O Warrior, afraid of death! Follow the dharma that's your own."

137. As to such a contrast, a further likely usage of *rājadharma* occurs when the Buddha goes to Kosala to meet King Prasenajit, and hears from him, "O Lord, I have suffered and been harassed by passion (*rāga*) and the kingly profession (*rājadharma*)" (20.10), to which the Buddha replies at length (12–51) as to how kings can benefit from the Buddha's teaching or law (14–17), earlier called his *(mokṣa-)dharma*.

138. See chapter 10 § E. Olivelle 1993, 103–6, 150 also sees their dilemmas in parallel and brings out that, in contrast to Arjuna who never hears about *āśramas* in the *Gītā*, Yudhiṣṭhira wants to hear about them at length. Olivelle's treatment of the *Bhagavad Gītā*'s emphasis on *svadharma* and *varṇa* (caste) rather than *āśrama* is full of implications for understanding these two brothers' differences (105–6, 197), but it is not "likely that the author [of the *BhG*] would not have known the classical [*āśrama*] system" (Olivelle 1993, 105) such as it was known to the author of the beginning of the *Śāntiparvan*.

Aśvaghoṣa puts Māra's insulting challenge in the simplest language of the *Bhagavad Gītā*,[139] recalling especially *Bhagavad Gītā* 2.31–37 where this command at 2.37 is preceded by urgings that Arjuna do his Kṣatriya *svadharma* in some of Kṛṣṇa's most insulting prods, goading him, just as Māra does the Bodhisattva, to stop looking like he is abstaining from battle through fear (2.35), and promising him a warrior's heaven of no ultimate value (2.32, 37). The upshot for Aśvaghoṣa is that Māra's challenge to fight and perform Kṣatriya *svadharma* rather than pursue *mokṣadharma* not only recalls the *Gītā* but puts Kṛṣṇa's words into the mouth of the devil. Here Aśvaghoṣa avails himself of a "Hindu notion" that, according to Gombrich, finds no place in the Pāli canon.[140]

Yet the *Śāntiparvan* remains Aśvaghoṣa's deeper frame of reference. As noted in chapter 11 § B, Yudhiṣṭhira has more trouble than Arjuna with this *svadharma* concept, and early in his postwar predicament he rejects Arjuna's own advocacy of it.[141] Moreover, as we have noted in this chapter, throughout the *Śāntiparvan* he is guided through a tension that Arjuna scorns from the start: that between *rājadharma* and *mokṣadharma*. As we have seen, these terms furnish the titles of the first and third sub*parvans* of the *Śāntiparvan* where they provide the scansion and arc[142] of Yudhiṣṭhira's postwar instruction by Bhīṣma that runs through what Fitzgerald (2004*a*) calls the four anthologies of the *Śānti* and *Anuśāsana Parvans*. This arc of teaching, levelled at Yudhiṣṭhira but overheard by all the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī as well (13.57.42–44), goes through four *dharma* topics: *rājadharma*, *āpaddharma*, *mokṣadharma*, and (in the *Anuśāsanaparvan*) *dānadharma*. It is this arc or

139. Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna "Arise!" four times: *BhG* 2.3; 2.37, 4.42, and finally more or less decisively at 11.33. Māra uses the verb three times in his short speech (13.9–13), twice in the imperative.

140. Gombrich 1985, 436 says of this "Hindu notion," "Buddhists do not even have the term *svadharma* (Pali **sadhamma*). . . ." As we have seen, Aśvaghoṣa can be a bit arch at times when he symbolically juxtaposes Kṛṣṇa and the Buddha. Unlike Bimbisāra, who also—if only in the *Buddhacarita*—challenges the Bodhisattva to take up arms, Māra must be overcome, and, with him, so too must such (from the Buddhist perspective) convenient and self-serving ideas as the *svadharma* of princes.

141. Just after Yudhiṣṭhira says he is renouncing the kingdom and going to the forest, Arjuna invokes Yudhiṣṭhira's *svadharma* amid insulting and mocking words (*Mbh* 12.8.3–5) reminiscent of Kṛṣṇa's in the *Gītā*. Vyāsa summarizes some *BhG* theology as well (12.26.14–16; 32.11–15; 34.4–7)—all to no avail. Yudhiṣṭhira finds these arguments inadequate, eventually requiring Vyāsa to come up with a ritual solution (the Aśvamedha sacrifice of Book 14), which Vyāsa already anticipates in this early *Śāntiparvan* sequence (12.32.20–24). See Hiltebeitel 2005*d*, 251–58.

142. Cf. Bowles 2007, 297 on the sequence of the three *Śāntiparvan* anthologies: "A logic of action informs this structure, a logic that models the proper duties of the royal life. A king's desire for salvation must follow the proper completion of his royal duty, or, rather, it follows *from* the proper completion of his royal duty. The syntactic order of the *ŚP* text . . . mirrors, therefore, the proper syntactic order of the royal life and the proper order of the king's concerns" (2004, 297; 2007, 391). After quoting this passage as it first appeared in Bowles 2004, I wrote: "I believe Bowles has found the right terms here for us to deepen our investigation of the fourth anthology: Would not *dānadharma* follow *mokṣadharma* in 'the proper syntactic order of the royal life'?" (2005*d*, 261). See also Hiltebeitel 2005*a*, 486–91 on this transition from Book 12 to Book 13.

sequence through which Yudhiṣṭhira must not only learn about kingship and its distresses but renounce his inclination to pursue *mokṣa*, and finally, in the *dānadharma*, abandon his wish to retreat to an ashram (Ibid.) in order to become a giving king. As far as I am able to discern, this fourfold sequence is unique in Indian *dharma* literature to the *Mahābhārata*, and may, I believe, be called one of its signature formulations about *dharma*.[143] It presents an outcome that the Buddha must, at least for himself, reject, but not one that he would necessarily reject for all. Indeed, Aśvaghoṣa has found it worth engaging, for I believe that his juxtaposition of *rājadharma* and *mokṣadharma*, along with his demonstrations of textual familiarity with both the *Rājadharma*- and *Mokṣadharma-Parvan*s of the *Śāntiparvan*, show that he has the first and third units of this arc firmly in view. But what about *āpad* and *dāna*?

With *āpad* the evidence is not very strong, but still worth considering. *Āpad* comes up only once in the first fourteen cantos, and not in the segment where Aśvaghoṣa undertakes what I have called a *Mahābhārata* reading. When the prince addresses the horse Kanthaka in preparation for his great departure, he says:

> 5.76. Easy it is to find companions for battle, for the pleasure of
> acquiring the objects of sense and for the accumulation of wealth;
> but hard it is for a man to find companions when he has fallen into
> distress (*āpadi*) or attaches himself to *dharma*.[144]

It is emphasized in this speech that the prince speaks to Kanthaka as a companion (*sahāya*) and friend (*suhṛd*; 5.79), but while foreshadowing that the prince will have to make his battle alone, without friends. Thus the interesting juxtaposition: companions are hard to find "for a man who has fallen into *āpad* or attaches himself to *dharma*." Since this is the only usage of *āpad* in the *Buddhacarita*, it is hard to say whether the prince uses the term to define his

143. It is, however, worth noting an intriguing parallel, though not a likely influence one way or another, in the addition of a *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* as a fourth canonical "basket" (*piṭaka*) by the Dharmaguptakas (see Pagel 1995, 7–36; Nattier 2003, 46 n. 80; 80–83, 129, 274–76). With four "baskets" (which denote collections of manuscripts) we have an analogy with Fitzgerald's notion of four "anthologies." And, putting aside the obvious reservation that one collection is for monks and the other for an epic king, there would also be some minimal correspondence in the last two pairings between the two sets of four in sequence: (*a*) *dharmapiṭaka*: *rājadharma*; (*b*) *vinayapiṭaka*: *āpaddharma*; (*c*) *abhidharmapiṭaka*: *mokṣadharma*; and (*d*) *bodhisattvapiṭaka*: *dānadharma*—with the *Bodhisattva* basket stressing the practice and teaching of the six *pāramīta*s that begin with *dāna* (Nattier 2003, 154 n. 38; 186). Curiously, the Bahuśrutīyas, with whom Johnston attempts to link Aśvaghoṣa (2004, xxx–xxxv), also had a *bodhisattvapiṭaka*, but in a canon of five baskets (Nattier 2003, 46 n. 80). I believe that Nattier's study of *Ugraparipṛcchā* could open new considerations on the sectarian and intertextual placement of Aśvaghoṣa (see n. 16 above).

144. *BC* 5.76: *sulabhāḥ khalu saṃyuge sahāyā/ viṣayāv āptasukhe dhanārjane vā puruṣasya tu durlabhāḥ sahāyāḥ/ patitasyāpadi dharmasaṃśraye vā*

present situation or is speaking disjunctively and implying that, rather than being in distress, he is only attaching himself to *dharma*. One is perhaps helped by a verse in which Udāyin says he speaks out of friendship offered in adversity, using *āpad*'s near-synonym *vyasana* (*BC* 4.64) (see Bowles 2007, 51–68), when he counsels the prince to gratify the women who are trying to seduce him between the third and fourth signs. This suggests that the prince's situation is adversity (*āpad*, *vyasana*) as others see it, but as he is beginning to see it himself when he speaks to Kanthaka, it is not adversity once he has begun resorting to *dharma*. Also interesting, and within the *Buddhacarita*'s *Mahābhārata* sector, is a verse using *vyasana*, where the prince responds to the Purohita:

> 9.41. For kingship is at the same time full of delights and the vehicle of calamity (*vyasanāśrayam*), like a golden palace all on fire, like dainty food mixed with poison, or like a lotus pond infested with crocodiles.[145]

These, however, are no more than reminders of a general theme. In any case, the disjunctive use of *āpad* and *dharma* makes it clear that there is no question of a compound *āpaddharma*. The best we get is a negative explanation as to why *āpad* would not be used in the first half of the *Buddhacarita* in the sense of *āpaddharma*. Unless perhaps one thinks of Māra, there are no princes or kings in distress over the possibility of losing their kingdoms in the text's first fourteen cantos.[146]

As to *dāna*, quite surprisingly, there is no use of the term in the first half of the *Buddhacarita*. But giving is made an important matter in Canto 18 where, not surprisingly, the Buddha is addressing not a king but one of those wealthy merchants, *gahapatis* or *gṛhapatis*, so important to both Theravāda and early Mahāyāna texts[147] for the economic support of early Indian Buddhism. A wealthy merchant of Kosala named Sudatta, "who was in the habit of giving wealth to the destitute," came "from the north" at night (*BC* 18.1–2) to see the Buddha in Rājagṛha. Having welcomed him, the Buddha turns quickly to "the fame in this world and the reward in the hereafter [that] arise from giving," and urges that "at the proper time" Sudatta should "give the treasure that is won through the Law" (5). After hearing an initial sermon mainly on impermanence, Sudatta "obtained the first fruit of practice of the Law; and . . . only one

145. *BC* 9.41: *jāmbūnadaṃ harmyam iva pradīptam/ viṣeṇa saṃyuktam ivottamānnam/grāhakulaṃ cāmbv iva saravindam/ rājyaṃ hi ramyaṃ vyasanāśrayaṃ ca.*

146. It is a different matter in the second half with King Prasenajit of Kosala (see n. 137 above), and of course with Bimbisāra too, who will be murdered by his son Ajātaśatru.

147. See Bailey and Mabbett 2003, 43–53 and *passim*; Nattier [2003] 2005, 23–31 and *passim*.

drop remained over from the great ocean of suffering for him. Though living in the house, he realized by insight the highest good" (15–16). As with Yudhiṣṭhira, whom the *Buddhacarita* never, of course, criticizes, somebody has to do this job of giving, and must be educated to do it in the right spirit. After a lengthy interval in which the poet describes Sudatta's insight in terms of the Brahmanical views he now gives up, including those about a deity (18–29), we return to Sudatta as he is offering to donate a monastery at Śrāvastī (57). Here the Buddha praises giving at length (61–80), mentioning that it is "one of the elements of salvation" (74); expounding on the varied virtues of giving wealth, food, clothes, abodes, vehicles, and lamps (76–78); and concluding that Sudatta's gift is of the best kind since it "has no ulterior motive" (79). Sudatta's gift will be land: the Jeta grove for the Jetuvana *vihāra* (81–85). The verses on the varied merits of giving different things could be called a capsule *Dānadharma*, since they are reminiscent of the middle third of the *Dānadharma Parvan* in which Bhīṣma regales Yudhiṣṭhira on the merits of giving all the same things, though above all, giving food and land to Brahmins. As with *āpaddharma*, we must again pose a negative explanation, this time as to why *dāna* is not used in the first half of the *Buddhacarita*, but in this case expounded upon in the second. It is not a matter of import until the Buddha must develop a postenlightenment theory of the gift[148]—albeit without any evidence that it would have been called *dānadharma*.[149]

Nonetheless, as I have shown elsewhere, giving food is among the topics brought up toward the end of Yudhiṣṭhira's discussions with Vyāsa in the first forty *adhyāyas* of the *Śāntiparvan*, where the topics of all four *dharma* anthologies are in fact anticipated.[150] So if Aśvaghoṣa is familiar with that segment, he would be familiar at least with these topics, if not with the plan and contents of the four sub*parvans* themselves that describe the full arc of Yudhiṣṭhira's postwar education on *dharma*. Actually, however, all four terms are also developed earlier in the *Mahābhārata*. Not counting the epic's *Parvasaṃgraha* or table of contents, where *dānadharma* is the only one not mentioned, there are, prior to the *Śāntiparvan*, fourteen usages of *rājadharma*, nine of *āpaddharma*, four of *mokṣadharma*, and six of *dānadharma*, each with both singular and plural (-*dharmas*) instances. Insofar as Yudhiṣṭhira is

148. See the succinct and elegant essay on this subject, said to be "highly theorized in Indian Buddhist textual discourse," by Reiko Ohnuma (2005, quoting from p. 102).

149. Note that Aśoka uses the reverse compound *dharmadāna* (Nikam and McKeon 1978, xii, 44–45 [Rock Edict 11]; Olivelle 2004*a*, 509 n. 28). Typically, his mainly Buddhist usages stresses the applicability of *dharma* as a universal term to *dāna*, whereas the *Mbh* usage makes *dāna* part of a structured curriculum of separate but integrated "laws."

150. See Hiltebeitel 2005*d*, 259, citing *Mbh* 12.37.1–2 and 43 on food and giving.

addressed about each of these *dharmas*, they pace him toward their grand unfolding to him in Books 12 and 13. Further, once past Book 13, there is also follow-up in Book 14 on both *mokṣadharma* (*Mbh* 14.2.17; 16.16; 19.63 and 49) and *dānadharma* (14.2.19; 4.7; 94.34)—the two that would still be ringing most insistently in Yudhiṣṭhira's (and readers') ears. Early uses of *rājadharma* are basic and not surprising. It is the only one of the four mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (seven times), and, as treated in the *dharmasūtras* and *Manu*, even Bhīma can remind Yudhiṣṭhira that Manu spoke on *rājadharma* (*Mbh* 3.36.20). Yudhiṣṭhira also hears about *āpaddharma* as something basic and au courant from Vidura after the return dice match, with a warning to proceed carefully as the Pāṇḍavas prepare for exile (2.69.19). But *mokṣadharma* and *dānadharma* are novel enough matters to be the subjects of *upākhyānas* or subtales told to Yudhiṣṭhira and company in the Forest Book. From Mārkaṇḍeya, Yudhiṣṭhira learns that he has just heard "the entire *mokṣadharma* (*kṛtsne mokṣadharme*)" (3.204.1) in a speech by a meatseller known as the pious hunter (*dharmavyādha*)—even though he has given up hunting and just markets meat that others supply—to a Brahmin in the *Pativratā-Upākhyāna* (3.196–206; van Buitenen 1975, 617–38). And *dānadharma* is a topic Yudhiṣṭhira wants to know about enough to ask the author himself, Vyāsa, which weighs more in the afterworld, *dānadharma* or *tapas* (3.245.26). Vyāsa favors *dānadharma* so long as one gives rightfully obtained wealth (245.32), which leads him to recount the *Mudgala-Upākhyāna* about the Ṛṣi Mudgala who gave unstintingly to guests what little he had garnered from living righteously off what he gleaned from harvested fields.[151] When an envoy of the gods tries to interest Mudgala in ascending with him to heaven, he tells Mudgala he will find there "the Law-minded, the masters of self, the serene and controlled and unenvious, those accustomed to the Law of giving (*dānadharmaratāḥ*), and champions with the scars showing."[152] But Mudgala rejects heaven in favor of "the eternal and supreme perfection that is marked by Extinction (*śāśvatīṃ siddhiṃ parāṃ nirvāṇa-lakṣaṇām*)" (247.43; van Buitenen 705). As this *upākhyāna* shows, the unfolding of *dānadharma* involves weighting it favorably over *tapas*: a matter that is returned to repeatedly in the *Dānadharma Parvan*,[153] and one that deserves further study

151. He is one of the *uñchavṛtti*/"gleaner" Brahmins and exemplars of *Ṛṣidharma* alluded to in chapter 12 § E.

152. *Mbh* 3.247.4; van Buitenen 1975, 703. It is interesting to see van Buitenen translate *dānadharma* this way for the first time, having seemingly struggled with it before this: translating it as a *dvandva* (1.94.11 and 17), omitting its translation (3.155.10), and trying out "the merits of gifts" and just "giving" earlier in the *Mudgala-Upākhyāna*.

153. From *Mbh* 13.57 on, see 13.93–94, 106, and 109–10. In some passages contrasting the two, *tapas* is associated with sacrifice and fasting, as it is in the description of the anchorites in *BC* Canto 7.

(see Olivelle 1993, 162–70). Indeed, a preference for *dānadharma* over *tapas* would probably win Aśvaghoṣa's and the Buddha's agreement, as would Mudgala's spurning of heaven for *nirvāṇa*.

Within the skein of Books 12 and 13, however, it is clear that what counts most for Aśvaghoṣa is *mokṣadharma*, which he seems to have introduced into Buddhist literature as a way to translate *nirvāṇa* that would clarify in both Buddhist and Brahmanical circles what is comparable and what is distinctive about Buddhist and Brahmanical *dharmas*. I remain under the impression that neither *mokṣadharma* nor a would-be Pāli equivalent has appeared in Buddhist texts before Aśvaghoṣa.

G. Postscript on Aśoka

Aśvaghoṣa gives three verses to Aśoka toward the very end of the *Buddhacarita*, telling how he put the Buddha's *dharma* on the map:

> 63. In the course of time king Aśoka was born, who was devoted to the faith; he caused grief to proud enemies and removed the grief of people in suffering, being pleasant to look on as an *aśoka* tree, laden with blossoms and fruit.
> 64. The noble glory of the Maurya race, he set to work for the good of his subjects to provide the whole earth with stūpas, and so he who has been called Caṇḍāśoka became Aśoka Dharmarāja.
> 65. The Maurya took the relics of the Seer from the seven stūpas in which they had been deposited, and distributed them in due course in a single day over eighty thousand majestic stūpas, which shone with the brilliancy of autumn clouds. (*BC* 28. 63–65)

Now one touchstone in marking a slightly less than civil recognition of Buddhism in the *Mahābhārata* was noted in chapter 12 § C: Mārkaṇḍeya's prophesy about a Kali yuga overrun with *eḍūkas* (*Mbh* 3.188.64–67, 70), *eḍūka* being the oldest term for Buddhist reliquaries, to begin with those for the bones of the Buddha after his cremation, and found in both Sanskrit and Pāli as a term for *stūpas*. A Buddhist counterprophesy can be found in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, where the Buddha tells King Ajataśātru of Magadha (who had by now killed his father Bimbisāra):

> After my decease, the masters of the world will kill each other from father to son; the *bhikṣus* will be engrossed in business affairs and the people, victims of greed. The laity will lose their faith, will kill and

> spy on one another. The land will be invaded by Devas and Tīrthikas, and the population will place its faith in the Brāhmins; men will take pleasure in killing living beings and will lead a loose life.[154]

Devas and Tīrthakas would seem to be Brahmanical temples and other holy places served by Brahmins. Note that the *Mahābhārata* passage also makes a rare predictive reference to Brahmanical temples (*devasthānas*; 3.188.65c), along with Brahmin settlements and hermitages of the great Ṛṣis, as being supplanted by the Buddhist *eḍūkas*. Clearly the contrast is instructive: *eḍūka* may cover a variety of funereal or other mounds, but the ones Mārkaṇḍeya mentions belong to a non-Brahmanical proliferation of the "future."

As John Strong shows, in the *Aśokāvadāna*, it is Aśoka's proliferation of *stūpas*, which that text actually calls *dharmarājikās*, that marks the transition from his being called Caṇḍāśoka, "Aśoka the Fierce," to Dharmāśoka, "Aśoka the Righteous"—a term for which Aśvaghoṣa lets "Aśoka Dharmarāja" stand alone, and that gives Aśoka the name Dharmarāja, which is also an epithet for the Buddha, in part because the building of stūpas represents "the reconstruction of the Buddha's body" (1983, 117–18). For Aśvaghoṣa, as for his Aśoka, *dharma* seems to be intended more as a universal value than a civilizational one—something the Buddhist *dharma* claims to make possible for everyone on levelled terms. If indeed the Sanskrit epics and *Manu* present civilizationally attuned ripostes to a never quite mentioned Buddhist *dharma*, Aśvaghoṣa would seem to provide both the Buddha and Aśoka as, in his mind, still potent challenges to the understandings of *dharma* in those texts, and particularly to the *Mahābhārata*'s never quite mentioned main story.

154. See Lamotte 1998, 94 [103], translating *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* verses 236–48.

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